

# How to Teach Chess, Even If You Don't Know How To Play

A Teaching Guide by Jeff Jantz

Mini games and chess exercises are a great way to introduce the game slowly. This way new players are learning only one or two pieces or concepts at a time. Below are a few mini games I have used. They are listed in the order I recommend but can be rearranged if necessary. See additional resources below.

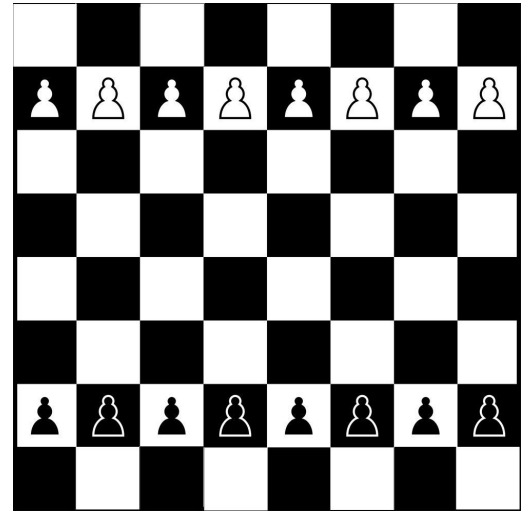
## Mini Games and Exercises

### **1. Pawn Race** *Review How Chess Pieces Move/Pawn*

Setup: Place all 16 Pawns on the board in their regular starting spaces; the white Pawns in row 2 (a2, b2, c2, ..., h2) the black Pawns in row 7 (a7, b7, c7, ..., h7).

Objective: Get one Pawn across the board. The first player to do so wins.

How to play: As always white goes first. The Pawns move and capture the same way they would in a regular game. Optional move: *En Passant* (You may want to wait till the second round to introduce this one.)



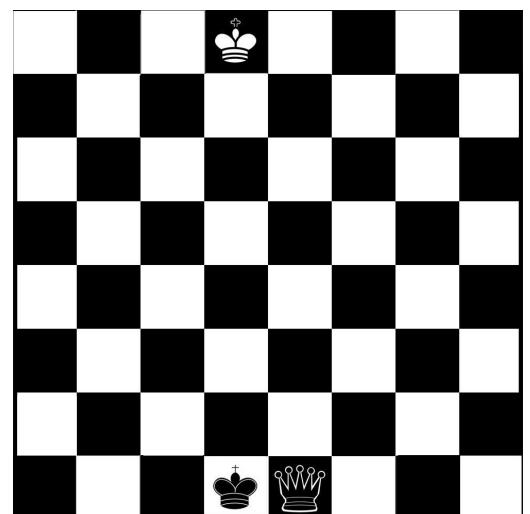
Note: This game is very simple and is really just designed to help players grasp how Pawns move and the territory they protect. Players still need to think ahead to win.

### **2. Checkmate Drill (with a Queen)** *Review How Chess Pieces Move/King, Queen, and Terminology below*

Setup: Place the black Queen (d8) and black King (e8) on the board on their regular starting spaces. Place the white King (e1) on its regular starting space.

Objective: The objective for black is *checkmate*. The objective for white is a *stalemate*.

Note: To make it a little more exciting limit the amount of moves for beginners 25 moves, experienced players should be able to do this in 15 moves or less.



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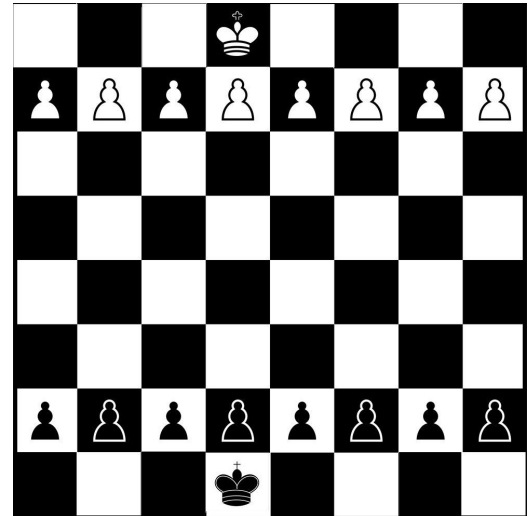
## 3. Pawn War *Review the moves of a Pawn, King and Queen*

Setup: Place all Pawns and each King on the board in their regular starting spaces; white Pawns (row 2), white King (e1), black Pawns (row 7), black King (e8). If a Pawn makes it all the way across the board it becomes a Queen.

Objective: Checkmate!

Note: This is simply a chess game without the Rooks, Bishops and Knights and where the Queen must be earned.

Hint: The King is the most powerful piece on the board (until you get a Queen). Don't be afraid to move the King.

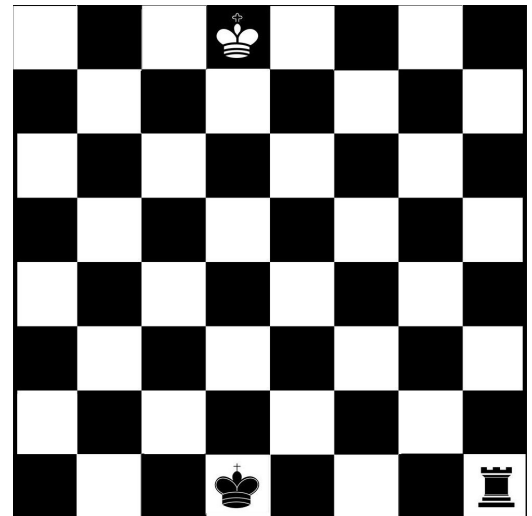


## 4. Checkmate Drill (with a Rook) *Review How Chess Pieces Move/Rook*

Setup: Place the black King and one black Rook on the board on their regular starting spaces; black King (e8), black Rook (a8 or h8). Place the white King 2 spaces up from its regular space (e3).

Objective: The objective for black is *checkmate*. The objective for white is a *stalemate*.

Note: This is basically the same as with a Queen just learning how to use a Rook. Limit the amount of moves, for beginners 25 moves. Experienced players should be able to do this in 15 moves or less.



## 5. Chess Moves Demonstration

Directions: When explaining to students how a piece moves clear the board and place only one piece at a time. Name each piece out loud and demonstrate the movements. Have students practice as well. If you have more advanced students let them show the beginners. This is a short activity but when they actually move the pieces it helps them to remember.

Note: I usually don't tell students about the Rook, Bishop or Knight until after the first 3 activities.

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## 6. Territory Observation

Directions: Place one piece on the board at a time and ask students, "How many spaces can this piece move to from this space?" or "How many spaces does it control from this space?". You can even have them place checker pieces (or coins, paper clips or whatever you have) on the board to mark the spaces the piece controls, this works especially well for the Knight.

Notes:

- This helps to reinforces how the pieces move.
- Students should notice that some pieces will increase their control from certain areas of the board. Ask them, "Which pieces can increases their territory by improving their position and how?"
- You can ask students "How many spaces a piece controls?" during a game as well. The answer will be different than it was with a clear board because other pieces will be blocking its reach.

## 7. Play a Full Game

Once students know how the pieces move and understand checkmate they are ready to play.

## 8. Create a Checkmate Puzzle

Directions: Have each student set up a scenario on a chessboard that is one move away from a checkmate. Let their classmates try to solve the puzzle and also determine if it is indeed a checkmate. Make sure the person solving the puzzle knows what direction the board is going and which color's turn it is.

Tip: it is sometimes easier to start with a setup that is a checkmate and work backwards one move.

Notes:

- There can be anywhere from 3 to 32 pieces on the board to achieve checkmate.
- Let students know its ok if they don't get the puzzle right right away. Even experienced chess players often think they have a checkmate when it's actually a check.

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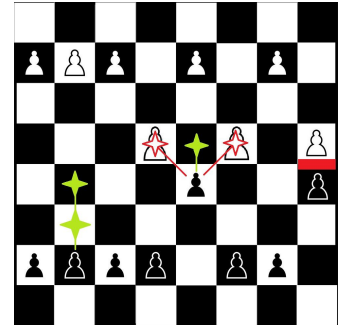
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## How Chess Pieces Move

Note: In chess a one **captures** an opponent's piece by taking its space. Not to be confused with checkers where pices jump a piece to capture it.

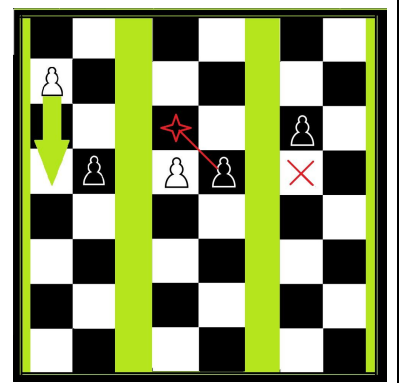
### Pawn

- Pawns move forward one square per move, with two exceptions.
- Each Pawn can move forward two squares on it first move only.
- A Pawn can move diagonally forward but only when capturing an opponent's chess piece and cannot capture a piece directly in front of it.
- Once a Pawn reaches the other side of the chessboard, it can be upgraded to any other piece other than a King.



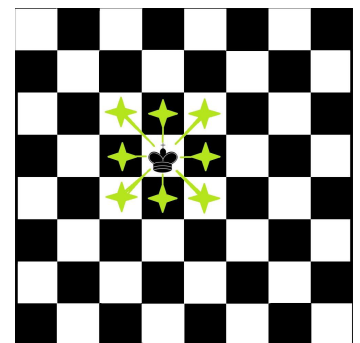
**En passant** (from French: *in passing*) is a move in **chess**. It is a special Pawn capture that can only occur immediately after a Pawn moves two squares forward from its starting square and passes through a space where it could have captured by another Pawn had it only moved forward only one square. In other words if a Pawn passes through an opposing Pawns protection zone the opposing Pawn can take the Pawn by moving to the said protected space.

Note: You may want to wait till the second or 3rd round of a Pawn race to introduces this move to new students.



### King

- The King can move one space in any direction front, back left, right or diagonal
- The King cannot move onto a space occupied by a piece from its own team.
- The King cannot move to a space that puts it into "check".
- The King can also "castel" AKA "castling". To Castle the Rook and the King must be on their original spaces with no other pieces between them. The King moves two squares towards a Rook, and that Rook moves to the square at the other side of the King. (it is not necessary to know this move for any of the Mini Games in this guide)



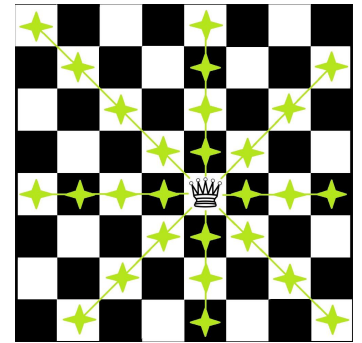
Note: the King is the most important piece. Once a King is in Checkmate the game is over. The King may be vulnerable but it can still be used in conjunction with other pieces to win the game.

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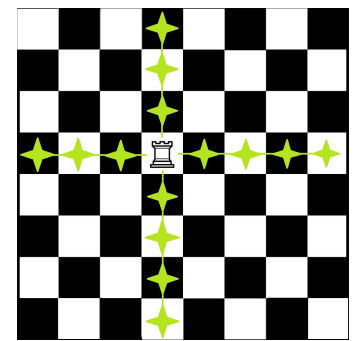
### Queen

- The Queen can move across the board in a straight or diagonal line in any direction (front, back left, right or diagonal) across unoccupied squares.
- The Queen cannot jump over any pieces.
- The Queen is the most powerful piece but can still be captured by any opposing piece.



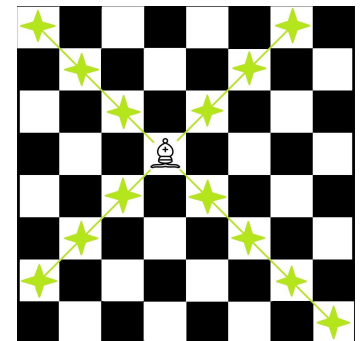
### Rook

- The Rook can move across the board in a straight line front, back left or right across unoccupied squares.
- The Rook cannot jump over any pieces.
- The Rook is also involved in a move called castling see *Terminology* section below.



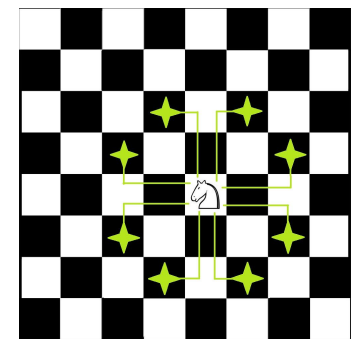
### Bishop

- The Bishop can move across the board diagonally in a straight line across unoccupied squares.
- The Bishop cannot jump over any pieces.
- Each player has a Bishop on each color. Because the Bishop moves diagonally it always on its original color.



### Knight

- The Knight always moves 3 squares in a "L" (Up/down 2 squares and over 1) or (over 1 and up/down 2)
- The Knight is the only piece that can jump over other pieces.
- The Knight captures the opposing piece on the space it lands on.



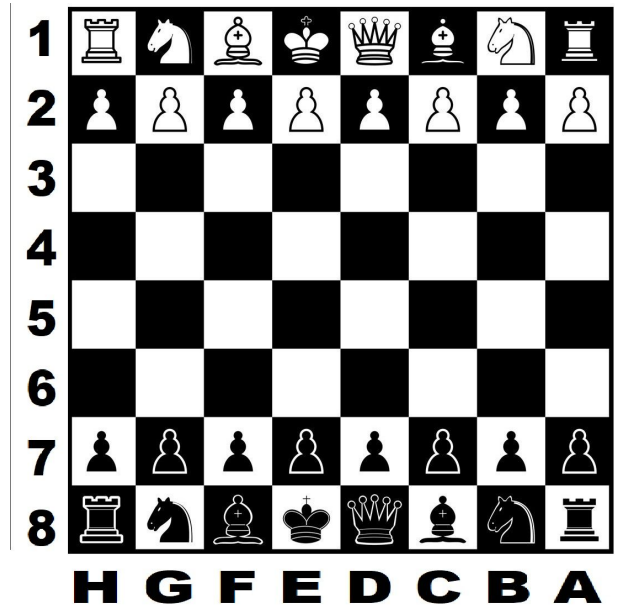
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## Full game board set up

Note:

- a1 is a black square with a white Rook.
- Both Queens are on their color and facing each other. "Queen on color!"



## Quick Tips and Rules

- Any piece can capture any opposing piece. The only 2 exceptions are involving the Kings.
  - The King is never actually captured just put in checkmate.
  - A Player may not make a capture that puts their own King in check.
- White always goes first. To pick who is white, one player may hold a black and white Pawn behind their back one in each hand. The other player chooses a hand.
- A King cannot put itself in check.

## Terminology

**Check** A check is when a player's King is under threat of capture on their opponent's next turn. Players cannot make any move that puts their own King in check. When a King is in check they have 3 potential options:

- 1) Run: Move the King to a safe space.
- 2) Block: Put another piece between the King and the piece threatening it.
- 3) Eliminate: Capture the piece threatening the King.

Note: Players must announce "check" to inform their opponent they are under threat.

**Checkmate** (also called mate) is when a player's King is in check and none of the potential options above are possible. If the King cannot get out of check than it is a checkmate. Once checkmate is achieved the game is over. the King is never actually captured.

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**Stalemate** The game is a stalemate if:

- One player has no possible moves and is not in check.
- Both players only have Kings or checkmate cannot be achieved with the pieces remaining on the board.

**Castling** is a special move for the King and Rook where a player moves their King two squares toward one of their Rooks, then moves the Rook to the square over which the King crossed.

Castling may only be done if:

- The King and Rook involved have never moved.
- The squares between the King and the Rook involved are unoccupied.
- The King is not in check, and the King does not cross over or end on a square in which it would be in check.

Note: Castling is technically a King move but I usually introduce it with the Rook. This is the only time a King can move two spaces in a single turn.

## **Resources**

ChessKid Lessons: The Magic Of Chess - animated video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KITEQZ5Sy4E>

Chess Corner Website

The "learn" tab has a separate page for each piece explaining the moves.

<http://www.chesscorner.com/tutorial/learn.htm>

Tutorials and basic chess rules.

<http://www.chesscorner.com/tutorial/basic/rules/rules.htm>

ChessKid - Learn and play chess with kids from around the world. Ideal for younger students.

<https://www.chesskid.com/>

Chess.com - Students can play online chess. Also has an associated free app.

<https://www.chess.com/>

Amerous 12" x 12" Travel Magnetic International Chess Set with Folding Chess Board  
\$12.99

[https://www.amazon.com/Amerous-Travel-Magnetic-International-Folding/dp/B01MQJARNR/ref=sr\\_1\\_7?ie=UTF8&qid=1506220322&sr=8-7&keywords=12+x+12+magnetic+chess+set](https://www.amazon.com/Amerous-Travel-Magnetic-International-Folding/dp/B01MQJARNR/ref=sr_1_7?ie=UTF8&qid=1506220322&sr=8-7&keywords=12+x+12+magnetic+chess+set)

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## **Thinking Like a Chess Player:**

- Think of each piece on the board not in terms of where it is but what territory does it control.
- The goal is to control territory especially the territory around your opponent's King. You are trying to trap the King not capture it.
- Try to think at least 3 moves ahead and predict your opponent's next 3 moves.
- It may help to think of pieces as having a point value system. The most commonly-used values are Pawn=1, Bishop=3, Knight=3, Rook=5, Queen=9, The King is most valuable but needs no points because the game ends if it is lost. This system can be used to gauge who is ahead in pieces but is not always an accurate gauge of who is winning.

You don't have to be a great chess player to lead a class in learning how to play. You really don't even need to know how to play you can learn right alongside your students with the min games in this guide. I have noticed as I have gotten better at playing the game students are more apprehensive to play against me, so not knowing how to play could be an asset to teaching the game. It's ok to lose to your students! Sometimes I let students switch sides half way through a game if I am winning just to give them a chance to win. I also try to force myself to play quickly which usually causes mistakes. Ask your students questions to promote critical thinking like "What do you think your opponents next 3 moves are?" or "Are any of your pieces in danger?" Simply knowing the way the game works is far different from mastery. Getting good at chess takes years but it's an exciting journey.

C2 Pipeline is happy to make this guide completely FREE all we ask is to give credit to the source and maybe send us some feedback to let us know how it's working for you.

For additional questions or to request a staff training workshop contact Jeff Jantz directly at [ei1839@wayne.edu](mailto:ei1839@wayne.edu) or Contact us at [c2pipeline@wayne.edu](mailto:c2pipeline@wayne.edu).