

## How to Play Chess – Beginner’s Guide

Chess is a classic strategy game enjoyed by people of all ages. This beginner-friendly guide explains how to play chess step by step, making it easy to learn the rules, understand how the pieces move, and start playing with confidence.

Whether you’re learning for the first time, teaching children, or need a quick refresher, this guide covers the basics of chess using clear explanations and simple language. If you don’t have a physical board, you can also use our free printable chessboard and pieces to play straight away.

### What Is Chess?

Chess is a two-player board game played on an 8×8 grid called a chessboard. Each player controls 16 pieces and takes turns trying to outmanoeuvre their opponent. The goal is to put the opponent’s king into checkmate.

### Setting Up the Chessboard

The chessboard is placed so that each player has a light-coloured square in the bottom-right corner. Each side starts with 16 pieces: one king, one queen, two rooks, two bishops, two knights, and eight pawns. White always moves first.

### How the Chess Pieces Move

King: Moves one square in any direction.

Queen: Moves any number of squares in any direction.

Rook: Moves any number of squares horizontally or vertically.

Bishop: Moves diagonally any number of squares.

Knight: Moves in an L-shape and can jump over other pieces.

Pawn: Moves forward one square (two squares on its first move). Pawns capture diagonally—they never capture straight ahead. If a pawn reaches the opposite end of the board, it must be promoted—usually to a queen.

### Special Moves

Castling: A move involving the king and a rook to improve king safety and develop the rook.  
Conditions:

- Neither the king nor the rook involved may have moved before.
- No pieces can be between the king and rook.
- The king cannot castle out of check, through check, or into check (squares the king passes over must not be under attack).

The king moves two squares toward the rook, and the rook jumps to the square next to the king.

En Passant: A special pawn capture that occurs when an opposing pawn moves two squares forward from its starting position and lands beside your pawn. Your pawn can capture it as if it had moved only one square forward, moving diagonally into the square the opposing pawn passed over. The opposing pawn is then removed from the board. This must be done immediately on the next move.

### **Check, Checkmate, Stalemate, and Winning the Game**

When a king is under attack, it is in check. The player must make a move to remove the check. If the king cannot escape capture, the position is called checkmate and the game ends. If a player has no legal moves but is not in check, the game is a stalemate, which is a draw.

### **Optional Rules and Tips for Beginners**

Turn order: White moves first, then players alternate turns.

Touch-move rule: If you touch a piece, you must move it (optional for casual play).

Beginner tips: control the centre, develop pieces quickly, avoid moving the same piece repeatedly.

Games can also end by resignation, timeout, or draw by agreement.

### **Why Chess Is Great for Beginners**

Chess helps develop concentration, problem-solving skills, and strategic thinking. It's an ideal game for children and adults alike and can be played casually or competitively.

### **What's on this page**

Step-by-step beginner chess rules

How to set up a chessboard correctly

Clear explanations of how each piece moves

Special moves: castling and en passant (with conditions)

Pawn promotion rules

Understanding check, checkmate, and stalemate

Basic turn order and optional rules

Beginner tips for strategy and practice