THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD

SQUARE ONE

CHESS FROM ZERO

THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD™



Never played? Start here. Every piece, every rule, from zero.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

THE STARTER BOOK · BEFORE THE WHITE BELT

Written by Moheb Girgis, FIDE National Instructor

Chess that produces evidence.

eightranksmethod.com

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THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD

Eight ranks. One board. Total mastery.

THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD™

Square One

Chess from Zero

The starter book · before the White Belt



Written by Moheb Girgis, FIDE National Instructor · FIDE ID 39935400

The Eight Ranks Method · New York

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This book belongs to _____

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Square One: Chess from Zero
The Eight Ranks Method™ · the starter book, before the White Belt

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Every chess position in this book has been checked by computer (python-chess) or is completely solved. Diagrams drawn with python-chess. Chess pieces: the Cburnett set by Colin M. L. Burnett, used under the BSD license.

The Eight Ranks Method is designed to produce evidence aligned to the six attributes of the New York State Portrait of a Graduate.
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Welcome to Square One

This book is for anyone, age six to adult, who has never played chess. It starts at square one: the board, the pieces, how each piece moves, and every rule you need to play a real game. It ends with a checklist. When you can do everything on the checklist, you are ready for the **White Belt**, the first rank of The Eight Ranks Method™.

Square One is not a rank. There is no Rank Day for it and nothing in it counts toward a rank. It is the step before the first step.

How to use it. Keep a chess set next to the book. Set up every diagram on your own board and move the pieces with your hands. Read one chapter, then do its *Try it* questions. The answers are at the back. A young reader should read with an adult; the adult does not need to know chess, because the book teaches you both.

How long it takes. Most learners finish in six short sessions (the plan for an adult or instructor is at the back of the book, just before About the author), or in two or three weeks at home.

The rules in this book are the rules of the FIDE Laws of Chess (effective 1 January 2023), the rules used in tournaments around the world.

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What every chess set has

A board of 64 squares and 32 pieces: 16 white and 16 black. Each side has one king, one queen, two rooks, two bishops, two knights and eight pawns. “White” and “Black” are the names of the two sides, whatever colors the pieces really are. White always moves first.

The six kinds of chess piece, from left to right: pawn, knight, bishop, rook, queen and king.

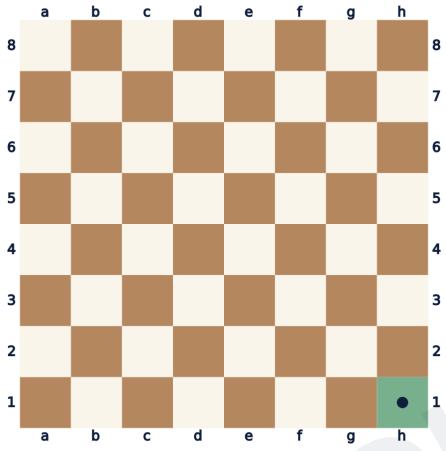
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Chapter 1: The board

Squares, files and ranks

The board is a square of 64 smaller squares, light and dark, in eight rows of eight. Lay it so that each player has a **light square in the right-hand corner**. Say it aloud: *light on the right.*

The columns that run away from you are called **files**. They have letters, **a** to **h**, from White's left to White's right. The rows that run across the board are called **ranks**. They have numbers, **1** to **8**, from White's side to Black's side.

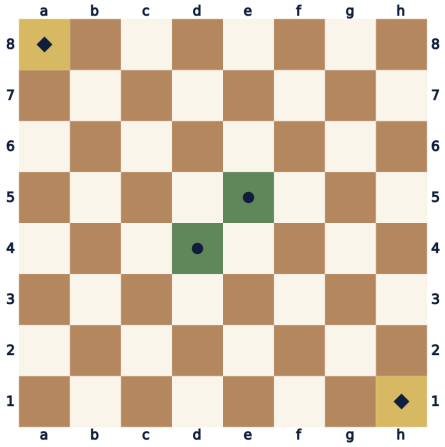


The empty board. The letters name the files and the numbers name the ranks. The dot marks h1.

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Every square has a name: its file letter, then its rank number. The light corner square at White's right hand is **h1**. The dark corner at White's left hand is **a1**.

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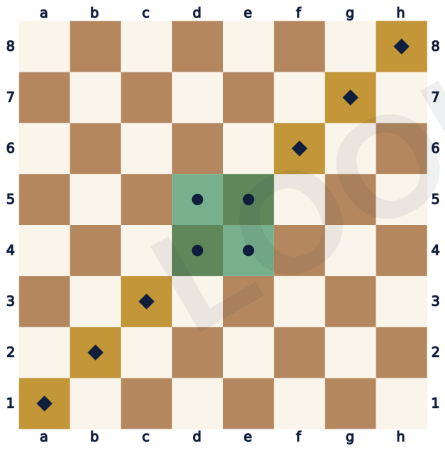


Four squares to find: d4 and e5 (dots), a8 and h1 (diamonds).

Diagonals and the center

A **diagonal** is a slanting line of squares that all have the same color, like a1, b2, c3, d4, e5, f6, g7, h8. The four squares in the middle, **d4, e4, d5 and e5**, are called **the center**. Pieces in the center can reach the most squares.

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The center (dots) and one long diagonal (diamonds).

Try it

1. Is h1 a light square or a dark square?
2. Which file is between the c-file and the e-file?
3. Name the four center squares.
4. Point to g7 on your board. Is it light or dark?

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Chapter 2: Setting up the pieces

Meet the pieces

The starting position on a real board. White sits at the near side, with a light square at each player's right hand.

Each side starts with its pieces on the two ranks nearest to it. White uses ranks 1 and 2; Black uses ranks 8 and 7.

Piece	Symbol in a diagram	Letter in notation	How many
King	♔ ♚	K	1
Queen	♕ ♛	Q	1
Rook	♖ ♜	R	2
Bishop	♗ ♝	B	2
Knight	♘ ♞	N	2
Pawn	♙ ♟	(no letter)	8

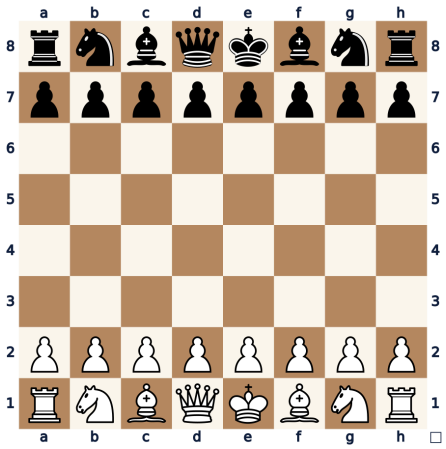
Reading a move. In this book a move is written with the piece's letter and the square it goes to: Ke2 means the king goes to e2. A pawn move is just the square: e4. An x means "captures": exd5 means the pawn on the e-file captures on d5. Chapter 8 explains the rest.

The starting position

Put the pieces out in this order, from the a-file to the h-file: **rook, knight, bishop, queen, king, bishop, knight, rook.** Then put the eight pawns on the rank in front of them.

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The starting position. White moves first.

Two checks before every game:

1. **Light on the right.** Each player has a light square in the right-hand corner.
2. **The queen goes on her own color.** The white queen starts on d1, a light square. The black queen starts on d8, a dark square. The kings face each other on the e-file.

Try it

5. Which piece starts on g1?
6. On which square does the black king start?
7. How many pawns does each side have?
8. Your queen is on e1 and your king is on d1. What is wrong?

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