THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD

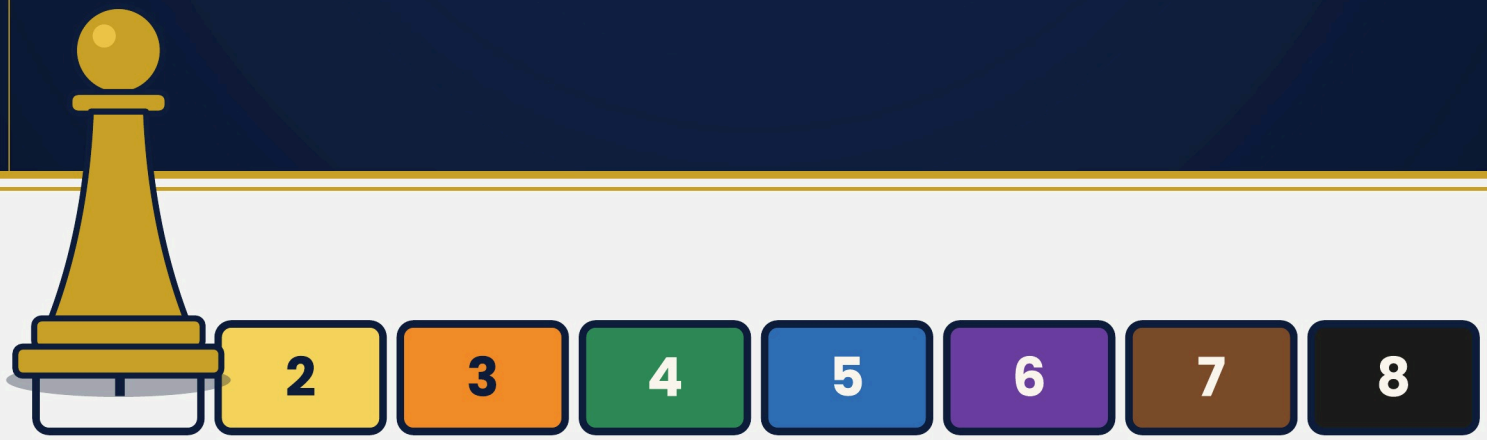
RANK 1 OF 8

WHITE BELT

STUDENT BOOK

THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD™

Twelve weeks. The board, the pieces, the first rank, earned.



BOOK 1 OF 8 · FOUNDATION TIER

Written by Moheb Girgis, FIDE National Instructor

Chess that produces evidence.

eightranksmethod.com

THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD

Eight ranks. One board. Total mastery.

THE EIGHT RANKS METHOD™

White Belt

Student Book

Foundation · Rank 1 of 8 · Book 1 of 8



LOOK INSIDE

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

The Eight Ranks Method · New York

This book belongs to _____

Site _____

Cycle _____

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First edition, 2026 · Version 1.2
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Every chess position in this book has been checked by a chess engine (Stockfish) or is completely solved.

The Eight Ranks Method is designed to produce evidence aligned to the six attributes of the New York State Portrait of a Graduate.
Not issued, approved or endorsed by the New York State Education Department or any school district. Schools decide how to use its reports.

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How to read a diagram

Every diagram is drawn from White's side: White's pieces start at the bottom, Black's at the top. The letters a to h name the files (the columns) from left to right; the numbers 1 to 8 name the ranks (the rows) from bottom to top. A square is its file letter and its rank number, so the bottom-left corner is a1 and the top-right corner is h8. The small square beside the board shows whose move it is: a white square at the bottom right means White to move, a black square at the top right means Black to move.

Piece	Letter	Symbol
King	K	♔ ♚
Queen	Q	♕ ♛
Rook	R	♖ ♜
Bishop	B	♗ ♝
Knight	N	♘ ♞
Pawn	(no letter)	♙ ♟

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A move is written as the piece letter and the square it goes to: Nf3 means a knight moves to f3; e4 means a pawn moves to e4. x means a capture (Bxe5), + means check, # means checkmate, O-O is castling on the king's side and O-O-O on the queen's side, e8=Q means a pawn promotes to a queen. Sometimes the starting square is written too, with a dash: d7-d5 means the pawn on d7 moves to d5, and a plan written b2-b4-b5 means the b-pawn goes from b2 to b4 and then to b5. This is standard algebraic notation, the notation of Appendix C of the FIDE Laws of Chess; the Laws print castling with the figure zero (0-0 and 0-0-0) and promotion without the equals sign (e8Q), and this book uses the letter O and the equals sign, as most English chess books do.

Chess piece drawings by Colin M. L. Burnett, used under the BSD license.

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How to use this book

Welcome to White belt. This book has five chapters, one for each pillar of chess. Every chapter teaches a few ideas with pictures, gives you a short game or position to play through, and ends with "Try it" exercises whose answers are at the end of the chapter. The last page of each chapter hands you to the STEM Lab with the same number, in the lab section of this book. Read with a board next to you and set up every diagram; chess learned from a page without a board does not stay.

This book takes twelve weeks. If you do not yet know how every piece moves, work through Square One first. Read one chapter every two weeks. Each chapter opens with a Review box. It asks about ideas from past chapters. In week one, read the chapter. Keep a board next to you. Set up every picture. Then do the Try it questions. Check your answers at the end of the chapter. In week two, do the lab for that chapter. Do the Progress Check next. It shows what you know. Was the chapter hard? Read the Help box. Was it easy? Read the Stretch box. Play games in your club. Write each game on the Game Lab pages. Add three comments to each game. Show the Family Corner to an adult at home. Let them ask you the question there. Rank Day comes in week 12. Bring this book, your five labs and your two games. Then show what you can do.

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Everything for one cycle

One book carries one twelve-week cycle. Here is what is inside it, counted.

Chapters	5, one for each pillar, each with its Try it exercises, a Help box, a Stretch box and a progress check
Review boxes	4, one at the start of Chapters 2 to 5
STEM labs	5, one for each chapter, each with its seven parts and its standards footer
Diagrams	49, every one drawn from a verified position
Puzzle practice	8 positions, every one completely solved
Game Lab pages	2 game records to fill in with your own games
Family corners	5, one question for each chapter (one every two weeks) for the adult at home
Glossary	58 chess words explained
Practice quiz	20 questions in the four Rank Day forms, with answers

The licensed site provides: the instructor, the boards and sets, the clocks, the Rank Day papers (the Knowledge Quiz and the Puzzle Set, seen only on Rank Day), the scoring, the Rank Progress Report within two weeks of Rank Day, and the certificate and rank at the ceremony. This book is yours to write in and keep.

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LAUNCH

CHAPTER 1 · PILLAR 1 · OPENINGS AND DEVELOPMENT

The board, the center and the Italian Game

By the end of this chapter you will be able to

- Set up the board and name any square.
- Say the three opening rules.
- Play the first three moves of the Italian Game.

Launch This chapter ends with STEM Lab W1.1: The Board Is a Grid.

I can: set up the board, name any square, and begin a game with the center, a knight and a bishop, and castling.

LOOK INSIDE

1.1 The board is a map

Look at the starting position. The board is eight files (the columns, named a to h from White's left) and eight ranks (the rows, 1 to 8 from White's side). The corner square at White's right hand is light: "light on the right" is how you check the board is turned the correct way. Each player's queen starts on her own color: the white queen on the light square d1, the black queen on the dark square d8.



Diagram 1. The starting position. White to move.

Say the names of these squares aloud with your finger on them: e4, d5, g1, b8, h7. Now find the four squares in the middle of the board: d4, e4, d5, e5. Those four are **the center**, and the whole first chapter is about them.

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1.2 Why the center matters

A piece in the center reaches more squares than a piece in the corner. Count it: a knight on d4 can jump to eight different squares; a knight on a1 can jump to only two.

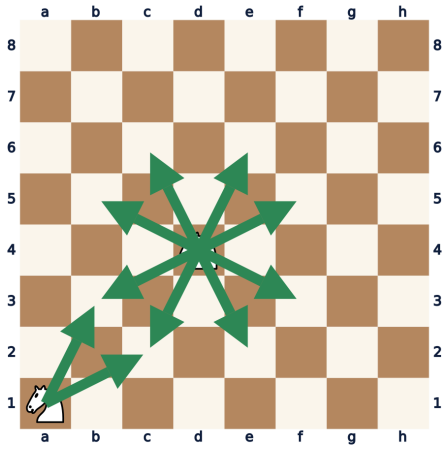


Diagram 2. A knight on d4 reaches eight squares; a knight on a1 reaches two

That is the whole reason for the center: pieces there do more. Pawns in the center take center squares away from your opponent's pieces, and your own knights and bishops can come out behind them.

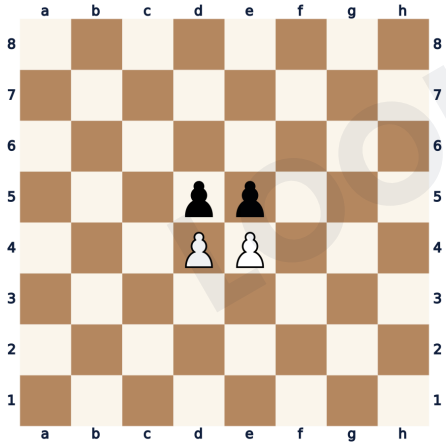


Diagram 3. Pawns on e4 and d4 take squares in the middle; Black's pawns on e5 and d5 push back

1.3 The three opening rules

Every good opening, for the rest of your chess life, follows three rules:

1. **Put a pawn in the center** on your first move: e4 or d4 as White, e5 or d5 as Black.
2. **Develop your knights and bishops** toward the center: a piece is "developed" when it has left its starting square for a square where it does something. Knights usually go to f3 and c3 (f6 and c6 for Black); bishops come out to squares where they look at the center.

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3. **Castle** as soon as you can, usually by move 6 to 8. Castling moves your king two squares toward a rook and the rook jumps over the king; it tucks your king away and brings a rook toward the middle. (The full castling rules are in Chapter 1 of the Yellow Belt Student Book; for now: the king and that rook must never have moved, no pieces between them, and you may not castle out of, through, or into check.)

Two things good players almost never do in the first ten moves: move the same piece twice when another piece is still at home, and bring the queen out early. The queen is the most valuable piece; if she comes out before the knights and bishops, your opponent develops pieces by attacking her, and you waste moves running away.

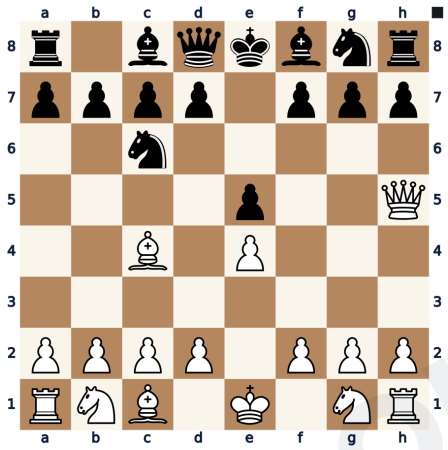


Diagram 4. Black to move after 1. e4 e5 2. Qh5 Nc6 3. Bc4. White's queen came out on move 2 and threatens Qxf7#. Black develops while chasing her: 3... g6 attacks the queen and prepares Bg7

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1.4 Your first opening: the Italian Game

Set up the start position and play these moves for both sides. Say each move aloud as you make it.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4

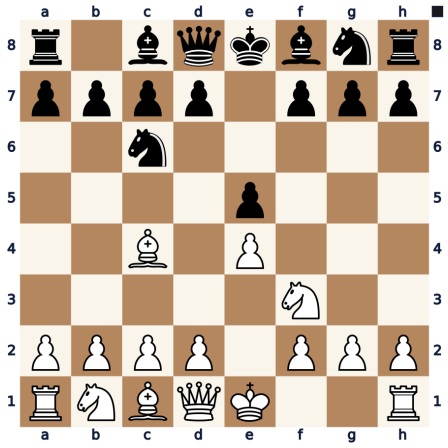


Diagram 5. After 3. Bc4: White has a center pawn, a knight and a bishop developed, and the king is ready to castle next move

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