

Rock Canyon Chess Club

Chess Notation:

If you would like to study chess from our handouts and from chess books, knowing about chess notation would be very helpful. The following is a brief overview of how the “algebraic” chess notation system works.

Each square on the board has a coordinate: Files on the chess board are indicated by small letters from “a” to “h” and rows (or ranks) are indicated by numbers from “1” to “8” as in the graphic below, so putting a letter and a number together gives you a specific square on the board. So at the beginning of the game if you look on square “d8” you should find Black’s Queen and on square “e1” you should find White’s King.

Moves are written in pairs with white’s move first followed by black’s move. The first pair of moves would be written after the number “1.” and so forth. The capital letter indicates the chess piece that moves (see below). If there is no capital letter then it is a Pawn that moves. The letter and number that follows give the file and row that the piece moves to.

Most games start with a Pawn move like “e4” which means white’s King Pawn moves out two squares, often followed by Black moving its King Pawn to block white’s Pawn, in this case, “e5,” so notation for these first moves would look like this: “1. e4 e5” If a piece is captured by a move, then an “x” is placed between the letter for the chess piece and the square that it moves to capturing the piece. So “5. Bxf7 Kxf7” would mean that on the fifth pair of moves, White’s Bishop takes the piece on square “f7” and the Black King captures the Bishop on the same square, “f7.” Now, if you see a notation like “exd4,” that would mean that the Pawn in the “e” file takes the piece on square “d4.” Also, another good thing to know is that if there are two of the same type of piece, let’s say two Knights that can move to the same square, then you would see something like “Nbd7” indicating that it is the Knight in the “b” file that makes the move to “d7” as opposed to a Knight at, let’s say, “f6” that could move to the same square. If the Knights were on the same file and could move to the same square (a rare thing), you might see something like “N6e5” to indicate which Knight moves, followed by where it moves to. (Notation is always as simple as possible giving only as much information as it takes to eliminate all but one possible move). There are other symbols listed below that indicate things like “check,” “checkmate,” “good move,” “questionable move,” etc., that are pretty easy to learn by playing a few games.

If you are reading chess notation and moving the pieces on a chess board, in order to prevent getting lost, it might help to keep a finger on the present move in the notation while you look at and consider that move on the board, so you can easily find your next move in the notation, which should be “at your finger tips.”

Notation symbols:

- Rows are numbered 1 through 8.
- Files are letters a through h.
- White is set up on rows 1 and 2.

K = King
 Q = Queen
 B = Bishop
 N (or Kt) = Knight
 R = Rook
 “blank” (or P) = Pawn

- x (or :) = capture
- + (or ch) = check
- mate (++, ‡ or #) = checkmate
- 1-0 = white wins (1 point)
- 0-1 = black wins
- 1/2-1/2 = draw
- O-O = castle short
- O-O-O = castle long
- e.p. = “en passant” (hxg3 e.p.)
- ? = questionable move
- ! = good move
- = or () = promotion (c8=Q)

8	a8							h8
7	a7						g7	
6	a6					f6		
5	a5				e5			
4	a4		d4					
3	a3		c3					
2	a2	b2						
1	a1							
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h

Notation - Sample Games

De Legal - Saint Bria

- Paris (1750)* (possible reasons for moves - white then black)
- | | | |
|--------------|------|--|
| 1. e4 | e5 | both sides are playing for control of the center |
| 2. Nf3 | d6 | Knights before Bishops, a general rule; protects the Pawn |
| 3. Bc4 | Bg4 | getting the Bishop out and attacking a weak square; Black pins the White's Knight. |
| 4. Nc3 | g6 | Knight gets out to a good square; preparing for a "fianchetto" |
| 5. Nxe5! | Bxd1 | sacrifices for a winning combination; gets too excited about winning White's Queen |
| 6. Bxf7 ch | Ke7 | attacks a weak square; Black's King tries to escape |
| 7. Nd5 mate! | 1-0 | The "Three Amigos Attack" (or the famous "De Legal attack") |

Reti - Casablanca

- Berlin (1928)*
- | | | |
|-----------|------------|---|
| 1. e4 | e5 | both are playing for control of center |
| 2. Nf3 | Nc6 | attacks the pawn; protects the pawn |
| 3. Bb5 | d6 | attacks the defender, threatening to win a pawn; protects the pawn |
| 4. c3 | a6 | preparing for d4, attacking the center; chases away the Bishop |
| 5. Ba4 | f5 | retreats; a bold center attack |
| 6. d4 | fxe4 | unblocks the Bishop; attacking the center |
| 7. Ng5 | exd4 | sets up a move to regain pawn; attacking the center |
| 8. Nxe4 | Nf6 | regains a pawn; gets Knight out & attacks undefended piece |
| 9. Bg5 | Be7 | pins Black's Knight; unpins the Knight |
| 10. Qxd4? | b5 | uses the pin – it would be illegal to take White's Queen; unpins & attacks at same time |
| 11. Nxf6 | gxf6 | checks the King gaining an extra move; now attacking 3 pieces at the same time |
| 12. Qd5 | bxa4 | attacks the Knight; captures the more valuable Bishop |
| 13. Bh6 | Qd7 | sets a trap for the Rook; protects the Knight and sets up an attack |
| 14. O-O | Bb7 | gets the Rook out of the corner; sets up a discovered attack on White's Queen |
| 15. Bg7 | O-O-O | attacks the trapped Rook; gets the Rook out of the corner & sets up a brutal attack |
| 16. Bxh8 | Ne5 | gains material but...too late; drives away the Queen & positions the Knight to attack |
| 17. Qd1 | Bf3! | retreats; forces White to open up a file and weaken his defense |
| 18. gxf3 | Qh3 | an unhappy move; preparing for the big move that will leave no hope |
| 19. Kh1 | Nxf3 | making room for the Rook to help out; threatening checkmate |
| 20. Qxf3 | Qxf1 mate! | 0-1 What move is better than winning the Queen? – checkmate! |

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6	a6				f6			
5	a5			e5				
4	a4		d4					
3	a3	c3						
2	a2	b2						
1	a1							
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h