



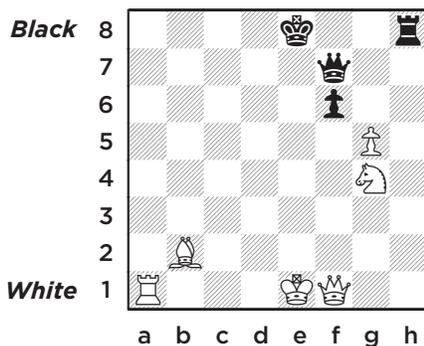
Keeping Score

How to read and write chess notation

Like musical or mathematical notation, chess notation gives players a way to record and share information about chess games: what moves were played, whether a move was good or bad, and so on. The method most widely used today is called **algebraic notation**. Knowing this system will allow you to record moves in your games (as required by the Official Rules of Chess) and learn from the majority of chess books in print.

Naming squares

In algebraic notation, every square on the chessboard has a name, made up of a lowercase letter and a number. The letter refers to the square's **file** (vertical column), and the number to the square's **rank** (horizontal row). Files are lettered *a* to *h* from left to right, from white's point of view. Ranks are numbered *1* to *8* beginning with the rank closest to white and ending with the rank closest to black.



In this diagram, the white bishop is on square b2 (b-file, 2nd rank). White's king is on e1 (e-file, 1st rank). Similarly, the white rook is on a1, the white knight is on g4, the white pawn is on g5, the white queen is on f1, the black queen is on f7, the black pawn is on f6, the black rook is on h8, and the black king is on e8. These names are used even if the ranks and files aren't labeled on the board; h1 is always a light square.

Piece moves

Piece moves are written using a capital letter (or, in many publications, a symbol) representing the piece:

Piece	Abbreviation	Symbol
king	K	
queen	Q	
rook	R	
bishop	B	
knight	N	

(Note that *N* is used for the knight because *K* is reserved for the king.) The abbreviation or symbol for the piece is followed by the square to which the piece is being moved. For instance, if the king in the previous diagram were moved to e2, the move would be written **Ke2** (read "king to e2").

Captures are shown using the letter *x* between the piece abbreviation or symbol and the target square. For instance, if white's bishop captured black's pawn, the move would be written **Bxf6** ("bishop takes f6").

Whenever a move gives check, the symbol *+* is added to the end of the move: if white's knight captured black's pawn, giving check, the move would be written **Nxf6+** ("knight takes f6, check"). Checkmate is indicated with the *#* symbol.

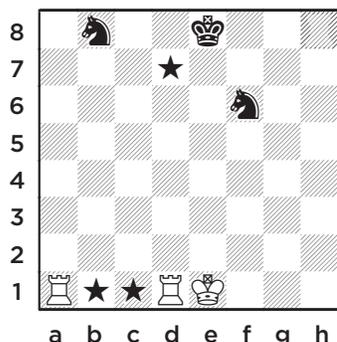
Pawn moves

No capital-letter abbreviation or symbol is used when writing a pawn move. For a one- or two-square forward move, all you need to write is the destination square. For instance, if white moved a pawn to g6, the move would be written **g6**. Nothing else is required.

Pawn captures, however, require one more piece of information: the file the pawn comes from. If black's pawn captured white's, the move would be written **fxg5** ("f-pawn takes g5").

Special cases

Sometimes, when a piece moves, another piece of the same type is capable of moving to the same square:



In this position, it's not enough to write "Rb1," because either rook can move there. To avoid confusion, insert the letter of the *starting* file between the piece abbreviation and the target square: **Rab1** ("rook from a-file to b1") or **Rdb1** ("rook from d-file to b1"). The same applies here to rook moves to c1. Similarly, to indicate a knight move to d7, you must write either **Nbd7** or **Nfd7**.

If two pieces are on the same file and either can move to the target square, insert the *number* of the starting *rank* between the piece abbreviation and the target square (for example, **R2c4** or **R5c4**).

Other symbols

Castling is represented in algebraic notation by two special symbols: **O-O** (kingside or "short" castle) or **O-O-O** (queenside or "long" castle).

In the case of an *en passant* pawn capture, it's enough to write the pawn move, including the *actual* destination square (as opposed to the one occupied by the captured pawn): **fxe6**. Some players and writers, however, add "e.p." to the end of the move: **fxe6 e.p.**

Similarly, in the case of a promoted pawn, it's enough to write the abbreviation of the newly promoted piece after the pawn move: **c8Q**. But as a matter of style, some players and writers insert an equal sign or slash: **c8=Q** or **c8/Q**. All of these forms are acceptable.

In chess publications, writers often want to identify a move as being especially good, bad or interesting. These kinds of evaluations are represented by the following symbols:

!	good move
!!	outstanding move
?	bad move
??	blunder
!?	interesting, surprising
?!	questionable, dubious

A sample game score

Chess games are recorded on scoresheets that include space for information about the game or tournament as well as all moves made by both players. A short game might look like this (try playing it out):

#	WHITE	BLACK
1	e4	f5
2	exf5	Nc6
3	Qh5+	g6
4	fxg6	hxg6
5	Qxg6#	

In a publication, the same moves would be written in a continuous line: **1. e4 f5 2. exf5 Nc6 3. Qh5+ g6 4. fxg6 hxg6 5. Qxg6#**.

When a black move is given with no preceding white move, an ellipsis is used to indicate the "missing" move: **1. ... f5**.

When to take notation

Recording moves is required in all USCF-rated events. A complete scoresheet is required for most draw and illegal-move claims. In a sudden-death time control that uses 5- or 10-second delay, you may stop taking notation when either player has 5 minutes or less left on his or her timer. Under 30-second increment time, however, you must record moves for the entire game.

Other forms of notation

Algebraic notation is used around the world. Since every language has its own letter abbreviations for the pieces, many publications use piece symbols instead, in order to reach a multilingual audience more easily. Some international publications use : instead of x to indicate a capture, and some use a shorthand for pawn captures: **cd** instead of "cxd5," for instance.

Older English-language publications use **descriptive notation**. In this method, ranks are numbered from the point of view of each player (white's 1st rank is black's 8th rank), and files are named after the pieces that occupy them at the start of the game: *QR* (for "queen's rook"), *QN*, *QB*, *Q*, *K*, *KB*, *KN* and *KR*. The abbreviation *P* is used for pawn moves, and movement is indicated by a dash or hyphen. Thus, **1. e4** in algebraic is **1. P-K4** ("pawn to king 4") in descriptive. The letter *x* is used for captures, but it's followed by the letter of the piece or pawn being captured, not the square: **BxN**. Descriptive notation is no longer widely used; for a more thorough explanation, see the Official Rules of Chess, 38F.