

CHESS TERMS EXPLAINED

Chess has its own 'jargon', or a lot of words that have a special meaning in chess. Often slightly different from our normal language. Think of words such as square, rank, line, promotion, trade, guard, prison, etc.

In this article I will briefly explain commonly used chess words, sometimes also by means of a position in a 'diagram' to clarify the term visually as well.

diagram: The picture (in books, prints, internet) showing a chess position.

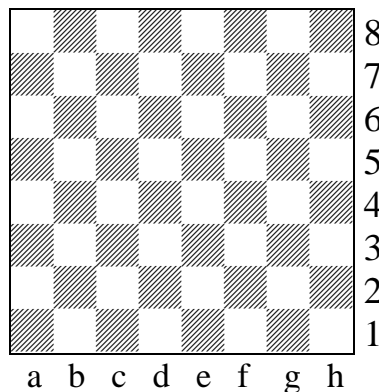
position: How the pieces are on the board.

(chess) board: Board on which chess is played.

(chess) pieces: The 'puppets' on the chessboard, with which you play.

(mini)game: A game or game of chess.

square: A box on the chessboard is called a square. *(The chessboard has $8 \times 8 = 64$ squares, 32 white squares and 32 black squares.)*



coordinates: The numbers and letters on the chessboard, so you know the names of the squares.

diagonal: An slanting sequence of squares on the chessboard. *(for example from a1-h8)*

line: A vertical sequence of squares is called a line. *(for example the e-line: from e1-e8)*

rank (row): A horizontal sequence of squares is called a rank. *(the 7th row: from a7-h7)*

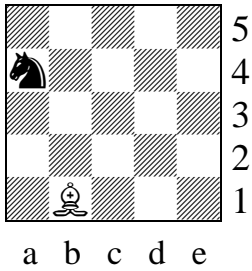
back rank: For white the rank from a1-h1, for black the rank from a8-h8. *(also 'first rank')*

move: Playing a piece.

capture (take, grab, eat): To take a piece from the opponent. *(Capturing is not mandatory!)*

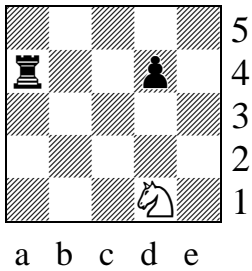
safe: Playing a piece without being able to be captured by the opponent.

attack: A piece 'looks' at an opponent's piece or important square.



If white plays Bb1-c2, the bishop attacks the black knight.

unsafe: Playing a piece to a square where it can be captured by the opponent.



Here Nd1-b2 is a safe attack, Nd1-c3 is unsafe (d4xc3).

promotion: If a pawn reaches the other side, it must be exchanged for a queen, rook, bishop or knight. Often also called 'getting a queen'. *(The pawn may not remain a pawn and may not become a king. So you can have several queens on the board.)*

minor promotion: If you promote to a rook, a bishop or a knight. *(Not a queen!)*

defend: To do something against an attack. *(By covering, moving away, interfering or capturing)*

moving away: The attacked piece gets out of the attack (to a safe square).

protecting: Ensuring that the attacked piece can be recaptured. *(Sometimes described as an 'attack on one's own piece'.)*

interposing (blocking): A piece moves *(safely)* between the attacker and the attacked piece.

uncovered piece: A piece that is not covered. *(Cannot be take back)*

check: An attack on the king.

getting out of check: To defend against check: capturing, interposing or moving away *(CIM)*.

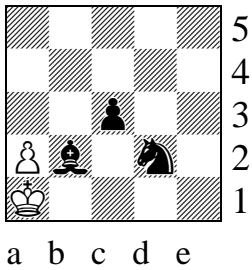
mate: You are in check and cannot cancel it. *(CIM is not possible)*

'prison': The part on the chessboard where the king can still go. *(When checkmating.)*

'guard': The piece that looks at squares, so that the king cannot go there (flee).

'chaser' (hunter): The piece that gives check. *(When checkmating)*

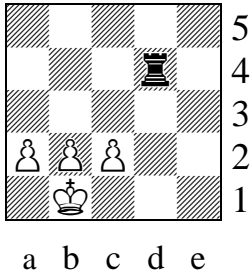
'protector': The piece that covers the hunter or guard. *(When checkmating)*



Here Bb2 is the chaser, pawn c3 is helper and Nd2 is guard.

escape (fleeing) squares: Squares where an attacked piece (*often the king!*) can still go.

luft (air): Create an escape field. (*Usually in the king position*)



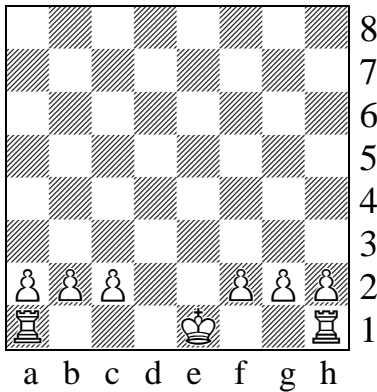
Black threatens 'back rank mate' with Rd4-d1#

Making luft (e.g. c2-c3 or a2-a3) prevents the mate.

assisted mate: pieces complete each other when mating. (*Chaser and guard*)

supported mate: the chaser is covered by a protector.

castling: A move in which the king and a rook are moved: the king always two squares to the side and the rook jumps over the king. (*Always start with the king's move!*)



short castling: the white king goes to g1 and then Rh1-f1.

long castling: the white king goes to c1 and then Ra1-d1.

value of the pieces ('points'): How many points the pieces are worth. (*Queen 9, Rook 5, Knight 3, Bishop 3, pawn 1. The king does not receive any points, because he may not be captured.*)

exchange (trade): Capture and recapture of pieces.

equal exchange: Exchange of pieces of equal value.

profitable exchange: Winning points by exchanging pieces.

the exchange: The difference (two points) between a rook and a bishop or a rook and a knight.

twofold attack: Two pieces attack the same piece or square of the opponent.

stalemate: You are not in check and can not make any - legal - move. (*on the whole chessboard!*)

illegal move: A move that is not allowed according to the rules of chess. (*For example, a incorrect jump with the knight or moving while your king remains in check*)

draw: even game in chess. (*For example, stalemate or if only kings remains*)

capture en passant: 'Capturing in passing' is only possible if the pawn moves two steps forward in the initial position and is placed next to an opponent's pawn. Then that pawn can capture as if the pawn has moved one step.

notation: Writing down the moves of a chess game.

vulnerable: Pieces or squares that are or could be attacked. (*Also called 'weaknesses'*)

activity: When a piece 'does a lot'. (*A knight on e5 is more active than a knight on a1. Also: 'attacking one or more pieces or important squares'.*)

cooperation: When different chess pieces join forces: (a) defend the same piece/square, (b) attack the same piece/square, (c) look at contiguous squares together or (d) cover each other.

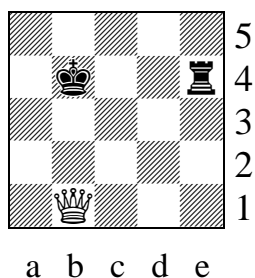
touch move: This is an important rule of the game. If you touch something, you have to move with it. If you touch an opponent's piece and you can capture it, you have to capture it!

'let go is set': This is also an important rule of the game. If you have let go of a piece, you have moved. You are then not allowed to put back or play anything else. If you still have the piece in your hands, you have to play with that piece. (*So: think first and then move!*)

MiCaSa: Develop all your pieces to the Middle, Castle and only then Start attacking. (*Eddy's 'Golden Rules' from Step 2. In Dutch: MORA: see exercises on my website about this!*)

attacking target: What you can attack in chess. The three attacking targets are: *King* (can you give check?), *Wood* (can you attack an uncovered piece or an insufficiently covered piece?) and *Square* (is there a square where you could checkmate?). You have to look for these attacking targets in every position!

double Attack: A piece attacks two *attacking targets* at once.



Qb1 gives check ('king') and attacks the rook ('wood').

(A double attack is not a twofold attack!)