

## YEOVIL u3a chess

Of chess, it has been said that life is not long enough for it, but that is the fault of life, not chess." – William Napier

Yeovil chess club meets on the first and third Thursdays of the month at 2.00pm at the group leader's house. New members welcome.



### Why do Yeovil u3a members come to chess meetings?

"I learned as a youngster and enjoyed it and wanted to recapture that when older"

"It's a gentle mental workout"

"I like that this group is informal: no pressure, not too serious"

"I come for the company of people and learning something new"

### Never too late!

There are plenty of books available and lots of resources on the web (for example [chess.com](http://chess.com) and [lichess.org](http://lichess.org)); these web sites provide tuition and a platform for playing against others at a chosen time-limit. It is a common misperception that chess is a slow game: a high-standard game can be played in 10 minutes or less - 5-minutes each. However, most older players prefer a leisurely time limit, perhaps 30-minutes each so that a game would take up to an hour.

### Computers

You can also choose to play against a computer. Computers became strong enough to beat the best human players 30 years ago, and now with artificial intelligence they have become even stronger. The computer can be 'dumbed down' in various ways to provide you with an enjoyable game that you have a chance of winning. The computer also makes chess a spectator sport because it can tell you what the best moves are as you watch the players think!

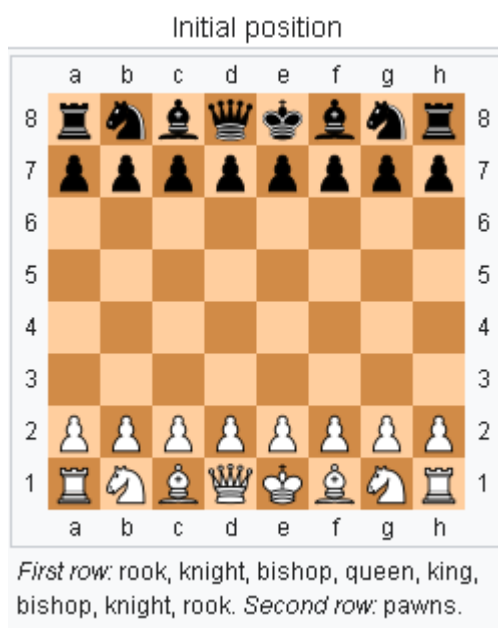
### Improving

As you play more and more, you will acquire a 'rating' which indicates your chess strength. When you win, your rating goes up and you will start playing stronger players. Rating is a number ranging from about 500 for a beginner up to 3000 or more. In analogy with tennis, a rating of 500 means you can hardly hit the ball!, and 1000 means you can usually hit the ball gently back over the net if it comes straight to you and not too fast. Of course, that's

not good enough if your opponent sends the ball back fast or with spin to where you are not! At 1500 you would usually not fluff a shot and can sometimes send the ball back reasonably well. At 2000 you can direct your shots to the corners and draw your opponent out of position. At 2500 you are a top player capable of occasionally beating the very best. At 3000 you are one of the very best players. When I was an active player 50 years ago, my rating was 2000 which is better than 96% of players but in the scheme of things it's not very good. 2500 is master strength and 3000 is world champion and computer level.

### Overview of chess

Most of us learned when we were young; if you have forgotten the rules, it is easy to look at a book or go on-line and find out. A nice feature of chess is that the moves of a game can be recorded and we can learn from previously-played games. Modern notation is known as algebraic and each square is identified by its coordinates made up of a lower-case letter and a number. This is what the pieces look like at the beginning; on the right is the corresponding diagram.



The white King is on e1 at the start. Rook,knight,bishop,queen,king,pawn are represented by capital letters R,N,B,Q,K,P with N for knight to distinguish it from K for king. The 64-black-and-white squares board must be oriented with square h1 as white, and the queen goes on her own colour square. It's surprising how often you see a board set up wrong in a shop or on TV! Captures are indicated by 'x' and, unlike draughts, are made by moving a piece to the square occupied by the opposing piece. For example, a move where a knight captures something on e5 would be written Nxe5. If a piece is not stated, then a pawn is meant; for example e4 means move the pawn to e4.

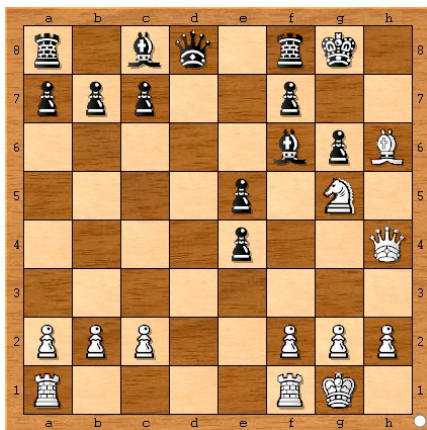
The aim of the game is to capture the opponent's king, but the game ends when capture of the king is inevitable. When the king is 'in check' (threatened with capture) and there is no move available which could avoid its capture, it is 'checkmate'. The game may also end in 'resignation' where a player sees no chance of avoiding checkmate in the long run and resigns. Draws are common too where neither side can gain a winning advantage.

Here's an example of 'Scholar's mate' which can catch out many beginners but is easy to avoid. The game ends in checkmate and a win for white in only 4 moves:

1. e4,e5 2. Bc4,Bc5 3. Qf3, Nc6?, 4.Qxf7 checkmate. Note that '?' indicates a bad move.

## Winning with an early checkmate

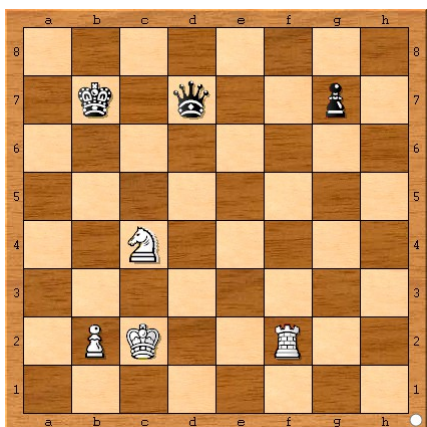
As you improve, you will learn some checkmating patterns and how to force checkmate when few pieces are left. You will begin to avoid elementary mistakes like leaving pieces where they can be taken, and you will learn to take advantage of your opponent's mistakes. Most games will still be won or lost because of mistakes; the equivalent in tennis is fluffing a shot or failing to hit the ball. Some games may be won by a successful attack.



**Example of a game ending early.** White has a strong attack and finishes the game with Bg7. Black cannot avoid checkmate. White is threatening Qh8 mate which black can only stop it by capturing the bishop. But then then Qh7 is mate.

## Tactics and strategy

Most games are not won by an early checkmate but by steady accumulation of subtle advantages. The equivalent in tennis would be getting your opponent out of position before going to the net and volleying a winner. You'll learn tactics such as 'forks' and 'pins' which help you gain 'material' (for example if you capture a rook by giving up a knight, you have gained material because a rook is generally more valuable than a knight). Once you have a material advantage you may be able to force trades until you reach a winning 'endgame'. In the endgame there are few pieces left and it may be possible to promote a pawn to become a queen (remember 'Alice Through the Looking Glass'?)



## Example of elementary tactics.

A queen is generally worth slightly more than a rook plus a knight but here white wins the game by some nice tactics. First Rf7! ('!' means good move) threatening to capture the queen. The queen is 'pinned' against her king and it is illegal to move her off the 7th rank. So black plays Qxf7 since the rook is unprotected! But white has planned for this and plays Nd6+ ('+' means 'check') which 'forks' the black king and queen. The king must move but then white captures the queen. Experienced players know that the resulting position is a win (white's king can help the white pawn to promote to a queen, and the black pawn can easily be stopped).

## More chess quotes

"Chess is the gymnasium of the mind." – Blaise Pascal

"Every chess master was once a beginner." – Irving Chernev

"Chess is a sea in which a gnat may drink and an elephant may bathe." – Hindu proverb

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