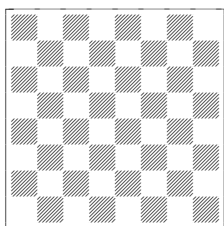


Becoming Familiar with Algebraic Chess Notation

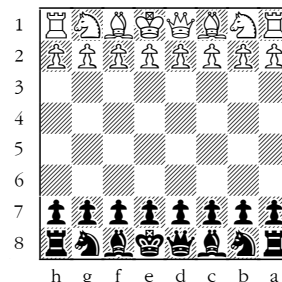
By Steven Craig Miller

As you continue to learn how to play chess, you need to learn how to read and write chess moves. Keeping “score” (that is, writing down your moves on a “scoresheet”) will help you improve by allowing you to study the game “post mortem” (after you finish the game). Unfortunately, many beginning students find keeping score to be awkward, so that keeping it distracts them from playing chess well. In order to avoid this problem, you need to become familiar with algebraic chess notation and your chess board!



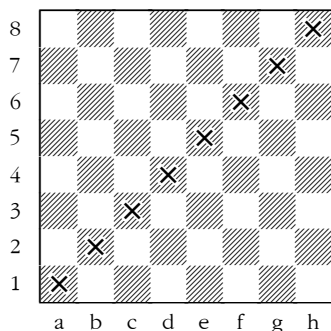
(This board is sideways!)

Many chessboards have numbers and letters on the edges to help you keep score. Make sure that the White pieces are set up on the first and second ranks, and the Black pieces are set up on the seventh and eighth ranks. The White side of the chessboard will have the a-file on the left and the h-file on the right. The Black side of the chessboard will have the h-file on the left and the a-file on the right.



The Long Diagonals

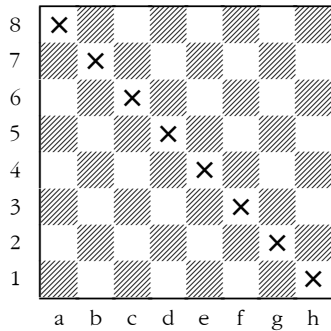
Becoming familiar with your chessboard also includes becoming familiar with various important squares on the chessboard. Perhaps the easiest set of squares belong to the two long diagonals. Let's take a look.



The **dark-square long diagonal** stretches from a1 to h8 (and includes the squares b2, c3, d4, e5, f6, & g7).

Q: What are the two corner squares of the dark-square diagonal?

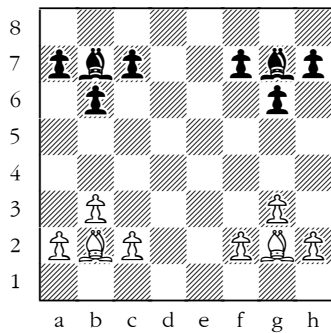
A: a1 & h8.



The **light-square long diagonal** stretches from a8 to h1 (and includes the squares b7, c6, d5, e4, f3, & g2).

Q: What are the two corner squares of the light-square diagonal?

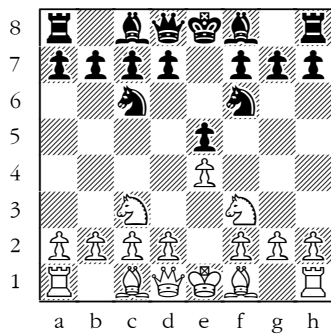
A: a8 & h1.



One common method of developing one's bishop is to **fianchetto** (a chess term derived from the Italian *fiancata* meaning 'moves played on the side or flank') them by placing them on the squares b2, b7, g2, or g7. Note that these four squares are on the long diagonals.

Q: Which are the four squares where one can fianchetto one's bishop?

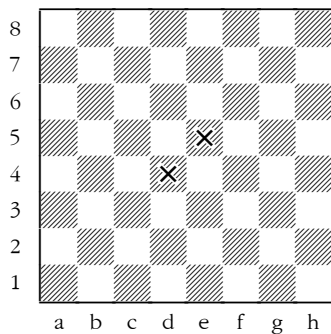
A: b2, b7, g2, & g7.



The **Four Knights' Opening** begins: 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nf6. These four knights are on the long diagonals.

Q: Which are the squares the four knights go to in the Four Knights' Opening?

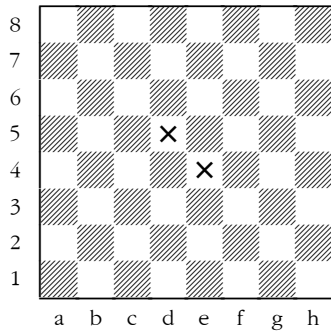
A: c3, c6, f3, & f6.



The **two central squares** on the dark-square diagonal are d4 & e5.

Q: What are the two central squares on the dark-square long diagonal?

A: d4 & e5.



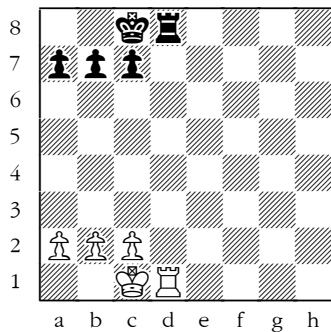
The **two central squares** on the light-square diagonal are d5 & e4.

Q: What are the two central squares on the light-square long diagonal?

A: d5 & e4.

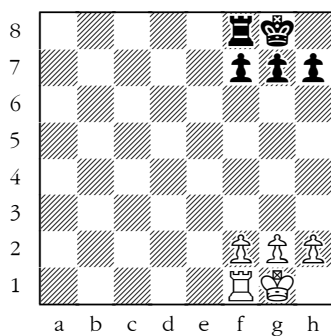
Castling

Becoming familiar with the chessboard also includes becoming familiar with likely places one might find a king. At the start of the game, both kings are on the e-file. If one castles kingside, then the king is moved to the g-file. And if one castles queenside, then the king is moved to the c-file. The correct method of castling is accomplished by moving the king two squares (and only two!) towards the rook and then moving the rook to the other side of the king. When one castles queenside (whether Black or White) the king ends up on the c-file and the rook on the d-file. And when one castles kingside (whether Black or White) the king ends up on the g-file and the rook ends up on the f-file.



Q: When one castles queenside, the king ends up on what file?

A: The c-file.



Q: When one castles kingside, the king ends up on what file?

A: The g-file.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Test over “Becoming Familiar with Algebraic Chess Notation”

- (1) What are the two corner squares of the dark-square diagonal? _____ & _____
- (2) What are the two corner squares of the light-square diagonal? _____ & _____
- (3) Which are the four squares where one can fianchetto a bishop?
_____, _____, _____ & _____
- (4) Which are the squares the four knights go to in the Four Knights’ Opening?
_____, _____, _____ & _____
- (5) What are the two central squares on the dark-square long diagonal? _____ & _____
- (6) What are the two central squares on the light-square long diagonal? _____ & _____
- (7) When one castles queenside, the king ends up on what file? _____
- (8) When one castles kingside, the king ends up on what file? _____
- (9) At the beginning of the game, the White king is set on which square? _____
- (10) At the beginning of the game, the White queen is set on which square? _____
- (11) At the beginning of the game, the Black king is set on which square? _____
- (12) At the beginning of the game, the Black queen is set on which square? _____