

Glossary

There are lots of special terms that we use in the chess world. You may not be familiar with them all, so this time we start an alphabetical glossary that may help you.

A

ANALYSIS - an examination of a position and "variations" (sequences of possible moves).

ATTACK - a move which threatens something (checkmate or a profitable capture).

ATTACK (DISCOVERED) - a move which opens a line, uncovering an attack by another piece.

ATTACK (DOUBLE) - a simultaneous attack against two separate targets, an important subset is the FORK (one man attacking two) and I have coined the term "trident" for a piece which attacks three men simultaneously.

B

BACK RANK - the RANK on which the pieces stand at the beginning of the game, so the first rank (White) and the eighth rank (Black). Often the scene of a dramatic CORRIDOR mate.

BISHOP - a piece with many different names, for example "fool" or "jester" (French), "runner" (German), "elephant" (Russian), etc. It is represented by the letter B or by the figurine L.

BLINDNESS - "chess blindness" when a player fails to see something that is obvious to you or me. It is also when you fail to see something that is obvious to me. It even applies when I fail to see something obvious.

BLITZ - probably the fastest sport on earth. The standard format is five minutes on the clock (for each player) in which to complete the entire game. The pieces really fly (literally sometimes). In the 1990s a tie-break version was introduced - 6 minutes for White against 5 for Black, Black getting "draw odds" (meaning that White had to win, any other result, stalemate for example, counting as a loss).

C

CAPTURE - If a piece moves to a square occupied by an opponent's piece the latter is captured and removed from the chessboard as part of the same move. NB: Cannibalism is outlawed - it is not permitted to move a piece to a square occupied by a piece of the same colour.

CASTLING - the modern successor, firmly established by the end of the 16th century, to the King's Leap. Castling is a move of the king and either rook of the same colour along the player's first rank, counting as a single move of the king and executed as follows: the king is transferred from its original square two squares towards the rook on its original square, then that rook is transferred to the square the king has just crossed.

The right to castle has been lost:

- a. if the king has already moved, or
- b. with a rook that has already moved.

Castling is prevented temporarily:

- a. if the square on which the king stands, or the square which it must cross, or the square which it is to occupy, is attacked by one or more of the opponent's pieces, or
- b. if there is any piece between the king and the rook with which castling is to be effected.

CENTRE - usually the four squares d4, e4, d5, e5.

CHECK - moving a piece (or pawn) so that it directly attacks the enemy king (or moving a piece off a line, revealing such a direct attack from another, stationary piece). It is not permitted to move one's own king onto a square that is attacked by an enemy unit, so the kings can never stand immediately next to each other (even though I frequently see that, together with positions of "mutual checkmate" and the suchlike in games played by beginners).

CHECK (DISCOVERED) - moving a piece off a line, revealing an attack on the enemy king from a piece placed further back on that line. A particular kind of DISCOVERED ATTACK.

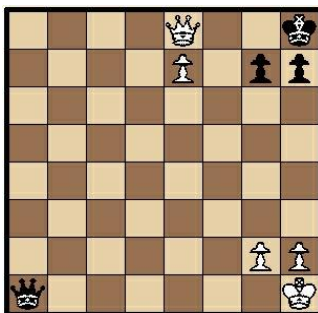
CHECK (DOUBLE) - a move which checks the enemy king from the arrival square and reveals a Discovered Check (Check, Discovered). The extra check generally increases the destructive power of the tactic.

CHECK (PERPETUAL) - an unstoppable sequence of checks which must, sooner or later lead to a draw either by three-fold repetition of position (see DRAW) or under the 50-move rule (see DRAW).

CHECKMATE - one player's king is in check and he/she cannot capture the checking piece, nor place anything between that piece and the king nor move the king. Checkmate ends the game. In theory "mutual" checkmate is impossible but positions such as the following are fairly common in games between beginners.

This circumstance is not entirely foreseen by the Laws of Chess. My own practice has been to declare the game drawn. Patrick Wolff in his *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Chess* tells a nice story about Grandmaster Yasser Seirawan. Yasser explained that "... many years ago, when I was a kid playing in my first tournament, I played a master. And just when I was about to promote my pawn, he checkmated me. But before he could say anything, I promoted my pawn to a king." Wolff asked "Did he tell you that was against the rules?" to which the well-known Grandmaster,

once of Nottingham England, replied "*Nah. He just checkmated my other king too, and that was that.*"



CHESSBOARD - usually abbreviated just to "board," this consists of a grid (8x8) of squares which are alternately light and dark (often referred to as white and black). The players sit opposite one another, each with a light square in their right-hand corner of the board.

The geography of the board: straight lines directly between the players (up-down on a demo board) are called "files" (an example is e1-e2-e3-e4-e5-e6-e7-e8 - see the Diagram), lines from side to side (left-right on a demo board) are called "ranks" (for example a3-b3-c3-d3-e3-f3-g3-h3) while diagonal lines are called ... "diagonals" (for example b1-c2-d3-e4-f5-g6-h7). When referring to one of these lines it's name is usually abbreviated to "e-file" or "third rank" or "b1-h7 diagonal."

It is quite remarkable that most of the time, if you see a chess position set up in a shop window, there will be a dark square in the right-hand corner, after all some of the people setting up these positions know how to play chess and for the rest it should be a 50-50 chance (but seems to come out like the buttered toast and carpet experiment). Incidentally, photographers have a good excuse if their photos show the board the wrong way round - newspaper and magazine editors often choose to invert the negative (because they think it looks better that way round), the net result of which is the same as if you were to stick a diagram to the inside of a window, then go outdoors and look in through the window (you'll find that the diagram still sort of makes sense except that the board appears to be set up the wrong way round.

The most common kind of board is a "roll-up" made of vinyl. [Tip: roll it up with the squares on the outside - when you unroll it, it will lie flat, or at least flatter than if you do it the other way.]

CHESSMEN - both pieces and pawns.

CIS - FIDE's Chess in Schools Commission.

CLOSED FILE - a file on which both players have a pawn or pawns.

COMBINATION - a sequence of forcing moves with a specific goal, and grounded in TACTICS.

CONNECTED PAWNS - a connected pawn is a pawn that can guard or be guarded by a pawn on an adjoining file. The term is almost invariably used in the plural to define a group of two or more such pawns.

CORRIDOR MATE - most often on the back rank, when a horizontal line piece (Q, R) checks on the back rank and the king's seventh (or second) rank flight squares are blocked or otherwise attacked.

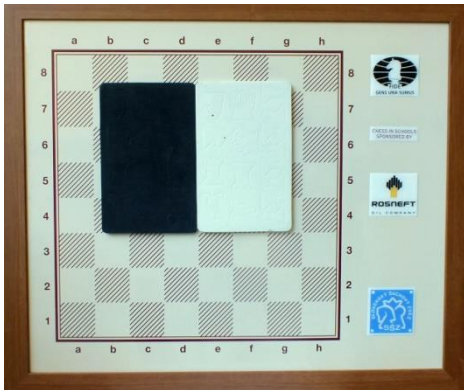
D

DECOY - to lure an enemy man from its defensive role.

DEFEND - make a move to defend against a threat, whether by protecting something, moving it, or making an even bigger threat.

DEFLECTION - a tactic that forces (or induces) an opposing piece to leave the square, rank or file it occupies.

DEMONSTRATION BOARD - A large 2-dimensional chessboard which hangs on the wall, used by teachers and coaches to show chess games and positions to a group. Often called "demo" board.



DESPERADO - a piece, EN PRISE or trapped. that is used to inflict as much damage as possible before it is captured.

DEVELOPMENT - Dodgy term, indiscriminately used for simply shifting a piece from its starting square to another one (usually nearer the centre). The pieces are part of your team and yes, generally speaking, they are better on the field of play than left on the bench or in the dressing-room but it is efficacy that counts.

DI - Development Instructor - a lower rung of FIDE trainers.

DIAGONAL - A straight line of squares of the same colour, running from one edge of the board to an adjacent edge, is called a 'diagonal'.

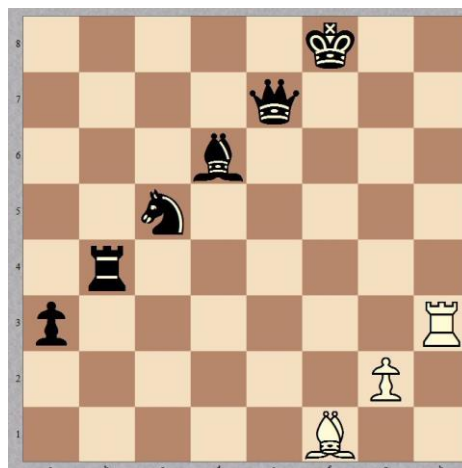


DIAGRAM - akin to a photograph, this is a pictorial representation of the pieces on a chessboard, using small pictograms (or pictographs) representing the chessmen. By convention they are invariably shown with White at the "bottom" and Black at the "top." Every square has its unique name (the same idea as the grid reference you find on maps - there is more on this under "Notation") as you can see in this diagram:

a8	b8	c8	d8	e8	f8	g8	h8
a7	b7	c7	d7	e7	f7	g7	h7
a6	b6	c6	d6	e6	f6	g6	h6
a5	b5	c5	d5	e5	f5	g5	h5
a4	b4	c4	d4	e4	f4	g4	h4
a3	b3	c3	d3	e3	f3	g3	h3
a2	b2	c2	d2	e2	f2	g2	h2
a1	b1	c1	d1	e1	f1	g1	h1

DISCOVERED - see under ATTACK, CHECK.

DOUBLE - see under ATTACK, CHECK.

DOUBLED PAWNS - two pawns of the same colour on the same file. Tripled pawns are also seen on occasion.

DRAW – A game may be drawn by agreement between the players, by stalemate, by three-fold repetition (see Article 9.2 of the Laws of Chess) or under the 50-move rule (Article 9.3). See also CHECK (PERPETUAL).

E

ECU - European Chess Union. The governing body for chess in Europe; under the umbrella of FIDE.

ELO - named after its inventor, Arpad Elo, the method of rating chess players used for all international tournaments and matches. The individual ratings are published monthly on the FIDE Rating List. Many national federations use the same system for national rating lists.

EN PASSANT - a pawn, attacking a square crossed by an opponent's pawn (which has advanced two squares in one move from its original square), may capture this opponent's pawn as though the latter had been moved only one square. This capture is only legal on the move immediately following this advance.

EN PRISE - something standing on a square where it can be captured (generally for nothing or at least by something of inferior value).

EXCHANGE - this has two meanings: an exchange of material (usually of roughly equal value, for example I take your queen, which is protected by something, and you recapture) or the difference between a minor piece (B or N) and a rook, so if I take one of your rooks with one of my knights and you recapture the knight with something then I have "won" the exchange.

F

FA - FIDE Arbiter.

FI - FIDE Instructor.

FIDE - Fédération Internationale des Echecs, the World Chess Federation. The governing body of world chess, recognized by the International Olympic Committee and a member of ARISF - the Association of IOC Recognised International Sports Federations.

FIDE ARBITER - the second highest title available to international level arbiters.

FIDE INSTRUCTOR - the middle rank of the five titles that can be gained by trainers.

FIDE MASTER - third level title - among the top 10,000 players in the world.

FIDE SENIOR TRAINER - the highest title of the five that can be gained by trainers. Marks a trainer as being among the top 100 or so in the world.

FIDE TRAINER - the second highest of the five that can be gained by trainers.

FILE - A vertical line of eight squares on the board. The rooks start on the a- and h-files, the knights on the b- and g-files, the bishops on the c- and f-files, the queens on the d-file and the kings on the e-file. see CLOSED, HALF-OPEN and OPEN.

FM - Fide Master.

FORCED - meaning "compulsory" or, more loosely, that a player lacks a reasonable alternative to a move played.

FORK - a double attack which can be made by pawn or piece. A couple of examples: pawn (e4) advances to e5 (preferably protected) attacking a bishop on d6 and a knight on f6 or, with black rooks on c6 and e8, a white bishop lands on d7.

FST - FIDE Senior Trainer.

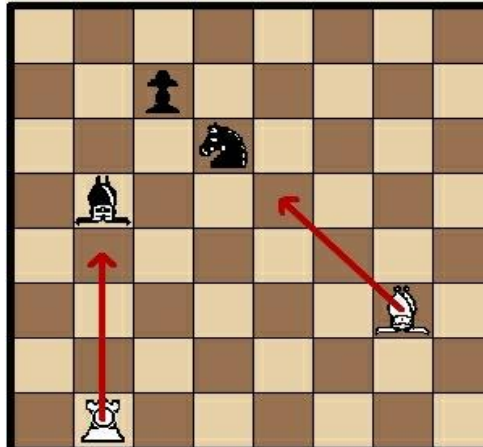
FT - FIDE Trainer.

G

GM - Grandmaster.

GRANDMASTER - the highest title (aside from World Champion) that players can aspire to - in the top 1000 players in the world.

GUARD - Destroying or Removing the guard (or defender) is a tactical theme illustrated by this diagram:



H

HALF-OPEN FILE - a file on which only one player has a pawn or pawns. In the next diagram, the b-, c-, d- and e-files are all half-open.

HANGING PAWNS - a PAWN ISLAND consisting of a pair of CONNECTED PAWNS on HALF-OPEN FILES. The term is used only when at least one of the pawns is on one of the four central files.



The white c- and d-pawns are hanging.

I

IA - International Arbiter.

ILLEGAL MOVE - a move of a piece or pawn in a manner that is not permitted by the laws.

IM - International Master.

INTERNATIONAL ARBITER - the highest title awarded to arbiters who are recognized to be capable of handling international events.

INTERNATIONAL MASTER - intermediate (second) level title - in the top 3000-4000 players in the world.

K

KING - the most important, but not the strongest piece, represented by the symbol K or by the figurine K.

KNIGHT - a piece, the name of which is fairly evenly split between "horse" (German, Russian, Spanish) and its knightly rider. It is represented by the letter N or by the figurine N.

L

LAWS OF CHESS - the rules of the game, drawn up by FIDE. The current Laws of Chess can always be found on the FIDE web site (www.fide.com). As I write, they are currently in section E of the Handbook.

LINE - a FILE, RANK or DIAGONAL.

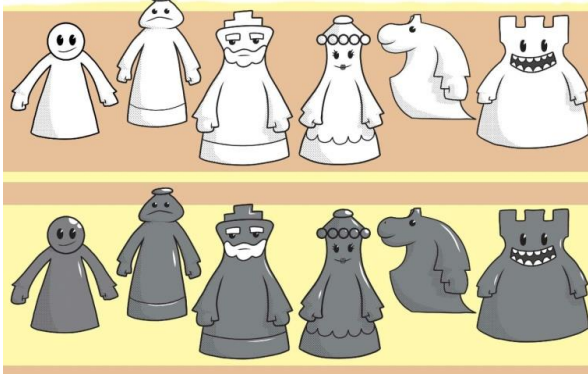
LINE-PIECE - a piece (B, R, Q) that can be moved any distance along a line (provided that intervening squares are unoccupied).

LOSING - no-one likes this but there are a few things to bear in mind. Lose as graciously as possible – Grandmaster Nigel Short demonstrated an amazing talent to smile at the opponent when resigning or signing the score sheet to confirm a loss - however, I won't put into print some of his thoughts about the particular opponent or game but I will reveal that once in the privacy of his room loud noises could be heard ...

M

MAJOR PIECES - Q & R (called "heavy" or "big" pieces in many languages).

MAN - the chessmen include all the pieces and the pawns.



MATE - see CHECKMATE.

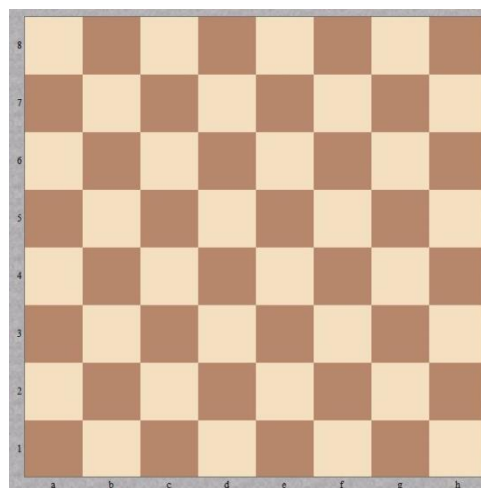
MATERIAL - all the men on the board except the kings.

MINOR PIECES - B & N (called "light" pieces in many languages).

N

NOTATION - since each square has a unique name, we can use those to describe both ideas and actual moves on the chessboard. This gives us 'chess language' which we can use to read, write and talk about chess games and chess positions.

There are various systems of notation that have been used (you may still come across some of them in old books - generally those in English and Spanish published more than 30 years ago), but today there is a universal standard notation which exists ... in two types (each with a further difference). This universal notation is universal because it uses the unique names of the squares (shown under "Diagram"), even in countries and languages which have entirely different alphabets (Arabic, Cyrillic, Kanji, etc.), everyone uses our Roman alphabet for the letters and numbers.



Most advanced chess books use the short form of universal standard notation. This form names only the arrival square for each move but it is less precise and makes life much more difficult for beginners.

Books for beginners and novices really ought to use the "long" form, which names both the departure square and the arrival square for each move, separated by a hyphen (effectively "from-to"). This is as easy as it gets for following what is happening on a chessboard. An example would be e2-e4 (which might well be the first move of a game).

By convention (in both short and long forms) an initial letter (or pictogram) of the piece involved is added at the beginning of the move description. Initial letters for the pieces do, however, vary, although there is a steadily increasing trend toward using the same small pictograms as in our diagrams in the text. Very, very rarely will you find a letter or pictogram for pawn moves - the convention is to use only the departure and arrival squares (with hyphen). Adding the initial letter of the piece making the move renders it easier to follow a sequence of moves, as does the convention that if the move is a capture, then we use a cross ("x") in place of the hyphen. A further convention is that a plus sign "+" is added to the end of a move (for example "e6xf7+" - a white pawn on e6 captures something on f7, attacking the enemy king) to indicate that the move attacks the opponent's king, giving check. Note that the thing captured doesn't get named (only the square it was on), even if it is a piece (rather than a pawn).

In English (both sides of the Atlantic and throughout the world) the initials (by convention, capital letters) used are:

K - King

Q - Queen

R - Rook

B - Bishop

N - Knight - "K" is already taken and "Kn" (which was used for at least one or two hundred years) is too messy, so "N" was adopted.

Castling: K-side or "short" castling (the K moving from e-file to g-file) is shown by "0-0" while Q-side or "long" castling is shown by "0-0-0." Why like that? Think of it as showing the number of vacant squares between king and rook immediately prior to castling.

Here is a little example of some notation:

1 e2-e4 e7-e5 2 Ng1-f3 d7-d6 3 Bf1-b5+ Nb8-c6 4 0-0 Bf8-e7 5 Bb5xc6+

1.e2-e4 e7-e5 2.♞g1-f3 d7-d6 3.♞f1-b5+ ♞b8-c6 4.0-0 ♞f8-e7 5.♞b5xc6+

Where did those extra numbers come from? We use them to make it easier to follow through the sequence of moves, so on the first move of the game White moved the pawn from e2 to e4 and Black replied by moving his pawn from e7 to e5, on the second move of the game White moved the knight nearest his king from g1 to f3 and Black replied by advancing his pawn one square from d7 to d6, on the third move of the sequence White moved his bishop from f1 to b5, giving check to the black king, and Black blocked the check by moving his knight from b8 to c6, on the fourth move White castled and Black replied by moving his bishop from f8 to e7, finally, White's fifth move was to capture the knight on c6 with his bishop from b5, giving check again to the black king. The last half-dozen or so lines of text is (roughly) how chess games were first written down. I think you will agree that our modern Universal Standard Notation is a big improvement both in clarity and brevity. You might also see 1. e2-e4, e7-e5; 2. Ng1-f3, d7-d6; 3.

Bf1-b5+, Nb8-c6; 4. 0-0 or something very similar but most editors consider the clutter of punctuation to be superfluous and I think that anything that is superfluous gets in the way of understanding.

Incidentally, we naturally use "1" for the first move of a game but we often start the numbering at "1" also if we start from a position that has arisen later on in a game instead of the actual "18" or "47" or whatever the actual move number in the game may have been.

Sometimes you may see an exclamation mark (or two) or a question mark (or two) appended to a move. These marks are a form of simple commentary and indicate, respectively, good (or very, very good!!) and bad (or very, very bad "??").

You will inevitably come across the short form of Universal Standard Notation. The last sequence would be rendered:

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5+ Nc6 4 0-0 Be7 5 Bxc6+
1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 d6 3.♞b5+ ♞c6 4.0-0 ♞e7 5.♞xc6+

As you can see, the check symbol is retained (so too the "x" symbol for a capture). Sometimes an extra bit of information is needed, as in:

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d3 d6 4 Nbd2. 1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.d3 d6 4.♞bd2.

The extra "b" for White's fourth move is necessary since both white knights could land on d2. [Another little complication here is that sometimes a number will appear in place of a letter, as in the case of two white knights, sitting on d3 and d5 - they can both capture something standing on f4 and Ndx f4 would not be very helpful, so the move would be written, respectively N3xf4 or N5xf4. Of course, in the long form we already have all the information we need and we don't need to do anything different:

1 e2-e4 e7-e5 2 Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3 d2-d3 d7-d6 4 Nb1-d2
1.e2-e4 e7-e5 2.♞g1-f3 ♞b8-c6 3.d2-d3 d7-d6 4.♞b1-d2

Incidentally, in order to "speak" chess, that five move line above would be:

(in short - punctuation added here for clarity) One, e four, e five; two, knight f three, d six; three, bishop b five check, knight c six; four, castles, bishop e seven; five, bishop takes c six check.

(in long) One, e two to e four, e seven to e five; two, knight g one to f three, d seven to d six; three, bishop f one to b five check, knight b eight to c six; four, castles, bishop f eight to e seven; five, bishop b five takes c six check.

O

OBVIOUS - that which a chess trainer sees and understands (and the pupil does not).

OPEN FILE - a file on which there are no pawns.

OPENING - the first moves of a game, that part of a game when we are concerned with getting the team out of the dressing-room and on to the pitch.

OPPONENT - a player's adversary.

OPPOSITION - a fairly advanced concept for a special relationship between the positions of the kings, partly depending on the distance between them.

P

PASS - There is no true "pass" in chess - each player moves in turn and is obliged to do so while there is just so much as a single legal move. The word "pass" is used loosely when one player has the option to make a rather insignificant move in order to pass the move to the opponent who will find him/herself in Zugzwang (see below).



Only three moves fail to win for White here: the suicidal Rg1-g5 and Rg1-g6 (which lose) and Rg1xg7 (which draws) but the "obvious" thing to do is to move the rook to a1, b1 or c1, passing the move to Black, who must play Kf8-e8, to be met by White's rook giving checkmate on the eighth rank.

PASSED PAWN - a pawn that is not blocked by an enemy pawn on the same file and which also has a free run to the "queening" square (so no enemy pawn on either of the adjacent files).

PAWN - the chessman of smallest size and value represented by the symbol P or the figurine P.

PAWN ISLAND - a group of pawns of one colour separated by at least one file from any others of the same kind.

PERPETUAL - see CHECK (PERPETUAL)

PIECES - strictly speaking, the K, Q, R, B & N but in general parlance is often used to include the pawns as well. [Tip: in the starting position, the pieces (of all normal sets) are placed in the sequence R, N, B (rising in height from the edge of the board towards the central files) and then the queen occupies the square of her colour, and the king the remaining square (the opposite of his own colour).]

PIN - this always involves three chessmen, the pinner, the pinned (piggy in the middle) and a target beyond which is more valuable than the pinned. A line piece glues an enemy man to the square it stands on either because the king stands beyond (so the pinned piece is unable to move, placing its king in check) or because something of greater value lies beyond (bishops often pin knights when the enemy queen stands further along the diagonal). Pins can be "absolute" (pinner pins pinned against the king) or "relative" (pinner pins pinned against something of superior value).

PLAYERS - the two players sit on opposite sides of the board. We may know who they are, in which case we may make use of their names and refer to a game Smith-Jones (by convention the first named player is the one who was playing White) or simply as White-Black (especially if we don't know the names of the players).

PROMOTE - Queen a pawn. This takes place on the "promotion" square or QUEENING SQUARE.

PROMOTION SQUARE - the square, at the end of a file on which a pawn stands, where it would promote to a piece.

Q

QUEEN - Now the strongest piece, the queen (in her original guise of Firz or Firzan) was one of the weakest until the new game was introduced c.1475. It is represented by the letter Q or by the figurine Q.

QUEENING SQUARE – bad way to refer to the promotion square – R, B, N are not queens!

R

RANK - a horizontal row of eight squares across the board. The pieces start on the first and eighth (back) ranks, the pawns on the second and seventh.

RATING - a method of estimating playing strength (see ELO). All the latest FIDE ratings can be found at <http://ratings.fide.com/>

RESIGN - retire from the game, conceding defeat, generally because the opponent has built up an overwhelming advantage. Beginners should never resign while more experienced players should use their judgement.

ROOK - English-speaking players look down on the term "castle," although that is used in many languages (French, German, Spanish). As usual, there are some different names such as "boat" (Russian). It is represented by the letter R or by the figurine R.

S

SACRIFICE - giving up material (on the abacus scale), nearly always in the hope or expectation of a subsequent gain on the same scale or, even better, a checkmate. Occasionally, a sacrifice may be made to secure a half point from an otherwise lost position.

SI - School Instructor - one of the titles awarded by FIDE. Many countries have their own national title.

SKEWER - a piece attacks along a line an enemy man (most often the king) and, just like a kebab, skewers something beyond it on the same line (sometimes called an X-ray attack).



The black rook skewers the white king to the white queen. The king must move and the queen is lost.

STALEMATE - The player whose turn it is to move has no legal move to play but his/her king is not in check. The result of the game is a draw by stalemate. Here is a typical position from a game between two near beginners, one of whom has picked up a little bit about the "abacus" and has been counting his/her beans by promoting several pawns. Black to play:



White's last move was f7-f8♔. Result - draw by stalemate. ♔b2-b6# mate was obviously preferable to the redundant promotion.

T

TACTICS - the main themes are FORK, PIN, SKEWER, DISCOVERED ATTACK, DISCOVERED CHECK, DOUBLE CHECK, Destroying or removing the GUARD or the DEFENDER, BACK RANK, DEFLECTION, DECOY, VACATION of square or line, ZWISCHENZUG, DESPERADO, ZUGZWANG.

TEMPO - from the Latin "tempus", usually used to mean "time equivalent to one move" ("tempi" being the plural). Also used to describe a "pass" move, a move designed simply to transfer the move to the opponent.

TITLES - FIDE awards titles to recognize achievement in play, training and for arbiters. The following sections list titles in descending order.

(ARBITER) - International Arbiter (IA), FIDE Arbiter (FA).

(PLAYER) - Grandmaster (GM), International Master (IM), FIDE Master (FM), Woman Grandmaster (WGM), Woman International Master (WIM), Woman FIDE Master (WFM).

(TRAINER) - FIDE Senior Trainer (FST), FIDE Trainer (FT), FIDE Instructor (FI), National Instructor (NI), Development Instructor (DI).

TOUCH MOVE - the popular way of referring to Article 4 of the Laws of Chess.

TRG - FIDE's Trainers' Commission.

V

VACATION - Square, Line

VARIATION - an alternative line of play, a sequence of moves which generally share a logical inter-connection.

X

X-RAY - frequently used as a synonym for SKEWER, its more important meaning is in the sense of "looking through," so in the simple K+R+R v. K example,



the rook that lands on h8 checkmates because it directly attacks the g8 and f8 squares, the king on e8 and x-rays all the squares beyond the king, critically its potential flight square d8.

Z

ZUGZWANG - The player to move (who may or may not be in check) has one or more legal moves and he/she would much prefer to "pass" because all the moves lead to a deterioration of the position. In chess, though, you can't truly "pass."

ZWISCHENZUG - an in-between move (from the German).