**This is not a complete or comprehensive list of chess terms but it should help you understand most of the common words.**

Action Chess

Played with a clock - Each player has 30 minutes to play the game.

See: Quick Chess, Blitz Chess, Speed Chess, and Clock.

Adjournment

The official suspension of a game in a tournament.

See: Sealed Move.

Adjudication

When the TD renders a decision to handle a dispute or settle an issue.

See: Appeals Committee.

Adjust

If you want to touch a piece (that you are not intending to move), you should announce this by saying “Adjust”. Otherwise, your opponent may invoke the Touch-Move Rule

Advantage

When you have an ‘Advantage’ in position or power.

Affiliate

A chess club that has joined the USCF. Can sell memberships and run tournaments. May be “Regular” or “Scholastic”

Algebraic Notation

A system of recording moves where the Files (columns) are labeled (a-h) and the Rows (ranks) are labeled (1-8).

Every square can be identified by a *LetterNumber* address.

Standard since 1981 for F.I.D.E. events and most common form used now.

See: Notation, Descriptive Notation, Ranks, Files

Analog Clock

A timing device consisting of two Clock Face Timers. The preferred standard is a Digital Clock that can be set with more accuracy and include various features such as a ‘Delay”. Black has the choice of the side the clock goes on \*unless instructed by the Tournament Director.

See: Clock, Digital Clock, Delay

Analysis

A form of study where a game or position is replayed or investigated. Emphasis should be on the evaluation of both players' strengths and weaknesses, strategies, tactics and alternative moves.

Annotation

Notes and comments made about the moves of a game.

(It is illegal to take notes about a game that is in progress).

See: Algebraic Notation, Descriptive Notation

Appeals Committee

If a player does not like the ruling of a Tournament Director (TD), he can continue to 'play under protest' and file a written request for an appeal.

Arbiter

An official (or Committee) who can judge and enforce rules or penalties. Tournament Director)

Attacking Move

A move that places the opponent in an immediate danger.

Backward Pawn

A pawn that has not crossed the center of the board

Back Row or Back Rank Mate

A checkmate position where the King is on Rank 1 or Rank 8

Bishop

The Bishop moves on a diagonal. Each side has two Bishops; one that moves on the light colored squares and one that moves on the dark colored squares. If you ever see a player has Bishops on the same color, a mistake was probably made (unless there was a possible Pawn Promotion). The Bishop can cover from 7 to 13 squares. Estimated Value, 3 Points.

Black / White

The general reference to the ‘DARK’ colored pieces or squares.

Blitz Chess

Another name for 'SPEED' Chess. Players are each given a set amount of time to play the entire game. Usual time is 5 minutes but can be from 3 to 14 minutes. Sometimes the winner will keep subtracting a measure of each time he wins as a handicap.

Mistakes are often made, and thus, it is not often considered quality chess. Many coaches will not allow players to play Blitz since it can develop the behavior of moving fast - just the opposite of the desired thinking pattern for regular chess.

Analog Clocks with a dial face often cannot be set to a degree of accuracy.

Use a digital clock if available.

See: Action Chess, Quick Chess, and Speed Chess, Clock, Time Delay

Blunder

A mistake or bad move

Board or Chess Board

The 'playing field' for the game. An 8 x 8 square of alternating light (WHITE) and dark (BLACK) squares. All 64 squares are used.

The term “Board” is also used to refer to the 'Place' in the tournament playing area where the player is to sit and play the match. The lower the number, the stronger the competition. (Board#1 is the TOP board). In a tournament with 'multiple sections' there may be multiple 'Boards'. Make sure you are at the right Board!

Book Move

After much analysis, books have been written telling players that certain moves are the ‘best’ to play in certain situations. When players follow these moves it is called Following the Book.

See: Variations

Bug House Chess

A ‘Team’ variation of two (or three) players. Each playing opposite colors.

Captured pieces are be given to the ‘Partner’ to place on his board.

There are many variations and ‘House Rules’ for how to play.

See: Siamese Chess

Bullet Chess

Another form Speed Chess or Blitz chess with a time control under 3 minutes

Bye

An unpaired player in a tournament. The lowest *rated player* in the lowest score group is given a bye each round when there are an odd number of players. A player is only given one bye per tournament. Many tournaments allow for a requested half-point bye for a round. This allows players who have to travel a distance a way to arrive late or leave early.

Capture

A move that is made that results in the Capture (removal of an enemy piece).

Castle

Another name for a Rook. (but it is not the official term).

Castling

Special move to get the King from the center of the board closer to the corner. A player must not have moved the King or the Rook at any time during the game. Cannot have any pieces between the King and Rook. Cannot castle out of check or through check. The King moves 2 squares, toward the Rook, and the Rook jumps over and lands next to the King. It is best to move the King first to avoid confusion about “Touch Move:”

Castle Long or on the Queen Side (0-0-0)

Castle Short or on the King Side (0-0)

Center

The middle squares on the chess board. d4, e4, d5, e5.

Check

When a move is made that places the King in danger. The Notation Symbol is (+)

The King must get out of danger by either:

1) Blocking the attack with another piece

2) Moving the King out of danger

3) Capturing the attacking piece

A player **does not** have to announce Check! It is up to the opponent to realize he is in danger. If he makes a move that does not get him out of check, THEN, you must inform him he is in check (and ***may*** also apply the Touch Move Rule” if desired). The King is never removed from the board! If it is discovered the King was in Check and other moves have taken place, you must go back and reconstruct the last legal position.

Checkmate

When a King is under attack (Check) and cannot escape the danger.

Checkmate ends the game. The Notation Symbol is (++ or #)

Players should shake hands when they agree on the outcome of the game!

See: Draw, Resign

Chess Board

The 'playing field' for the game. An 8 x 8 square of alternating light (WHITE) and dark (BLACK) squares. All 64 squares are used.

Chess 960

A game invented by Bobby Fisher where players take turns setting up an initial starting position rather than the normal: Rook – Knight- Bishop –Queen - King – Bishop knight – Rook. There are 960 different combinations to set up the pieces.

(https://www.chesskid.com/terms/chess960)

*Chess Life*

Monthly magazine of the United States Chess Federation (USCF).

*Chess Life For Kids* replaced a publication called “SchoolMates”

The Magazine is On-line or you can pay extra for a printed copy.

Chess Master

A player with a USCF rating of 2200 or higher.

Only about 2% of all chess players ever reach this level.

See: Class, Rating

Class

The USCF rating groups:

2500+ Grand Master

2400 – 2499 Senior Master

2200 - 2399 Master

2000 - 2199 Expert

1800 - 1999 Class A

1600 - 1799 Class B

1400 - 1599 Class C

1200 - 1399 Class D

1000 - 1199 Class E

800 - 999 Class F

600 - 799 Glass G

400 - 599 Class H

200 - 399 Class I

Under 199 Class I

See: Rating

Clock / Timer

A timer that measures the amount of time a player has used during the game. Used to keep games from lasting long periods of time by making a person move before the time expires.

Old clocks were “analog” clocks and the newer standard is a DIGITAL CLOCK.

See: Time Control, Sudden Death, Analog Clock, Delay

Closed Game

When the pieces are such that there are very few moves. Restricted movement.

See: open game, closed position

Closed Position

Pieces have limited mobility on the board.

See: Closed Game, Open Game

Closed Tournament

Tournament for a restricted group of players.

See: Open Tournament, Invitational Tournament, Quad, Swiss

Club Ladder

A ranking method where players can move up or down “rungs” to determine a ranking order of participants in the club.

Club Rating

A measurement used within a club to rank participants (different from USCF ratings).

Coffee House Player

A term applied to describe a casual chess player.

A person who likes to play, but non-competitive (Non USCF member).

Combination

A thought-out series of moves done for the purpose of achieving and advantage.

Cross Check

Another term sometimes used for a Discovered Check or Fork Check

Cross Table

The official tournament results showing players, opponents, and scores.

Defensive Move

A move that is made in response to an attack or threat. Protection.

Delay

A term used with Time Controls in chess to allow for ‘Response time’ between making the move and pressing the button on the clock.

Digital Clocks are the preferred timers for Chess tournaments since this cannot be applied to Analog Clocks.

Descriptive Notation

An older system of recording moves where the (columns) Files are labeled by the name of the piece. (Pre-1980)

The (rows) Ranks are numbered relative to each player's side of the board.

See: Notation, Algebraic Notation

Developed

A piece that has moved from its original location and is in a location that provided an advantage.

(Undeveloped is a piece that is not being used well)

Diagonal

A move that is not on a Rank or File

Bishops and Queens can move on a Diagonal. Long Diagonal is Corner to Corner

Digital Clock

A timing device consisting of two Timers. The preferred standard is a Digital Clock that can be set with more accuracy and include various features such as a ‘Delay”. Black has the choice of the side the clock goes on \*unless instructed by the Tournament Director.

Director

The person running a Tournament. (TD)

Chief Director, Assistant (ATD), Club, Local, Senior, National, International

Discovered Attack or Discovered Check

The movement of one piece reveals and attack by another piece.

Most often associated with a Check.

See: FORK

Double Attack or Double Check

When multiple pieces are attacked at the same time with one move.

Whe King is put in check by two pieces at once.

The only way to get out of 'Double Check' is to move the King.

Doubled Pawns

When two or more Pawns are on the same file.

This is usually a Weakness in position

See: Pawns

Doubles Chess

A ‘Team’ variation of two players. Each playing opposite colors.

After five moves (or some predetermined number), Players switch boards. Also called Siamese Chess or Bug-House.

Down In Material

When you have fewer pieces than your opponent.

Down The Exchange

When you exchange (Trade) a ‘higher’ piece for a lower piece.

For Example: Queen for a Rook, Rook for a Bishop, etc.

See: Up the Exchange

Draw

A tie game. A draw can happen when:

1) Players agree not to continue the game

2) Neither player has enough material (pieces) to force a checkmate

3) A stalemate occurs

4) Other special rules apply. (50 Move, Down Flags, No Progress)

En Passant

A special way a Pawn can capture another Pawn.

If a pawn pushes two squares, could it have been captured if it had been pushed 1 square? If Yes, the pawn may be captured just as if it was moved 1 square

It must be done on your very next turn.

See: Pawn

En Prise

A French term (ahn Preez) that means a piece may be captured for free.

End Game

The final stages of the game.

F.I.D.E.

International Chess Laws. Pronounced **FEE-DAY.**

French for: Federation Internationale des Echecs.

Fifty Move Rule

The game is a tie if 50 moves are made without a pawn more or capture.

The counter is reset after a pawn moves or there is a capture.

File

A vertical column, labeled from White's side of the board, from left to right and given the titles A-H.

See:RANK



Flag

A device on a clock to signal that the time has expired.

See: Clock

Fool’s Mate (A 2 Move Checkmate. It requires Black has moved the F and G pawns).

Forced Move

When a player has no option but to make one responsive move.

Forfeit

When a player is assigned a loss without playing a game.

Usually as a result of not appearing to start a match.

Fork

When two or more pieces are under attack at the same time by a piece.

See: Double Attack

Gambit

A move in chess where a player often gives up a piece (usually a pawn) in the hope of gaining an advantage in development or attack.

The name of the *North Carolina Chess Association* (NCCA) newsletter.

House Player

A player used in a tournament to allow a player with a BYE to play a game.

The results of the game are not recorded as part of the tournament.

Illegal Move

A move that is not allowed or done incorrectly.

Usually leaving the king in Check (or failing to get out of check)

Moving pieces to an incorrect square.

Insufficient Material

A player does not have enough pieces to force a win.

Isolated Pawn

A Pawn who does not have any other Pawns adjacent to it.

See: Pawn

International Master (IM)

A rating above 2400 and also participated in 3 international tournaments.

Invitational Tournament

A select group of players are asked (invited) to participate.

See: Closed Tournament, Open Tournament, Quad, Swiss

King

The King is the central piece in the game of chess. The King is never removed from the board. The King can only move 1 square in any direction. A King may not place himself in danger (Check). A King must get out of check or the game is over.

The King may capture other pieces.

KING SIDE: The location to the right the King (Files: F, G, H)

Knight

The Knight looks like a 'Horse' on many chess boards. Each side has two Knights. Knights move in an 'L' shape. If they start on a light, then they will land on a dark square. If they start on a dark square, they will land on a light square.

They can cover from 2 (from the Corner) to- 8 squares when in the center.

Estimated Value (3 Points).

Long Diagonal. The diagonal from opposite corners

Lost Position

A position in a game where the player **should not** be able to win.

See: Won Position, Draw

Major Piece

Is assigned more value: Queen = 9, Rook = 5

Minor Piece: Knight = 3, Bishop = 3, Pawn = 1

The VALUE is only used to help evaluate possible moves.

Man

General term to refer to any piece on the chess board: Also Piece.

Match

A game or series of games between individuals or teams.

Material

The pieces on the board

Middle Game

The portion of the game where changes are taking place.

Middle Game

The position in a game where pieces have been developed.

Usually after move 15

Minor Piece

Minor Piece: Knight = 3, Bishop = 3, Pawn = 1

Major Piece: Queen = 9, Rook = 5

The VALUE is only used to help evaluate possible moves.

Move

A turn. Places may not Skip or pass.

NCCA

North Carolina Chess Association.

Official Chess Organization approved by the USCF for holding a State Championship and scholastic events.

NCCHESS.ORG

New Player

A USCF designation to a player who has never played in a tournament.

Notation

A common 'language' for recording the moves of a chess game so it may be replayed or analyzed. Also used to document TIME CONTROL.

See: Algebraic Notation, Descriptive Notation

Offense / Offensive

An attacking move

Open Game

A game where the pieces are free to move.

Usually the result of lots of captures and exchanges.

Open Position

See: Open Game, Closed Game

Open Tournament

A tournament with no restrictions for participation.

See: Closed Tournament, Invitational Tournament, Quads, Swiss

Opening

General term for the first moves of the game.

See: Middle Game, End Game, Book Move

Opponent

The person (or computer) you are playing.

Opposition

The term used for when Kings are facing each other!

Over Worked Piece

A term used to describe a piece that is doing many jobs.

A piece may be attacking something, pinned or protecting another piece.

Pairing Card

Used by the TD to show opponent, color and results of games.

Pairing Number

Based on rating in descending order, the best player is #1.

Pairing Sheet

Used in a tournament to show who is playing who, what color each person has, and where they are to play (Board Number) for a round.

Passive

No aggressive move

Past Pawn

A Pawn that cannot be stopped by another Pawn.

Pawn

One of the weakest men on the board. It can only move forward 1 square at a time. On its first move any Pawn may move two squares.

A pawn captures diagonally. Estimated Value (1 Point).



Pawn Chain

Three or more pawns that are connected.

See: Pawn

Perpetual Check

A series of moves that are made where on opponent is placed in check with no progress towards a checkmate. May also involve Repetition of Position

Piece

See Man. Major, Minor: A Pawn is not usually considered a piece.

Pin

When one man cannot move without placing another man in danger.

Usually when a piece has been used to block a check.

The 'blocker' cannot move without placing the King in danger again.

Playing Room (Tournament Hall)

Location where tournament matches are being player

See: Skittles Room

Poisoned Piece

A capture of piece that seem attractive but leads to combination and loss.

Position

What the pieces on the board look like.

Won Position, Lost Position

Promoted Pawn

If a Pawn can advance across the board it can be transformed into any other piece. (but not another King)

Usually the Highest value piece placed on the board (Queen or Rook)

Under Promotion is for a Knight or Bishop.

A promotion does not need to reclaim a captured Piece

You could have 9 queens or 10 Rooks.

Quad

A Round-Robin tournament of four players.

Players should be of equal strength.

Pairing order and colors are in the “*USCF Official Rules of Chess*”

See: Round Robin

Queen

The Queen may move like a Rook horizontally (left or right) across the board, or vertically (up or down), or like a Bishop on the diagonal.

She can cover 21 - 27 squares. Estimated value (9 Points).

Queen Side

The files associated to the left of the (D File). (A, B, C)

Quick Chess

A game played with a clock where each player gets 10 or 15 minutes.

See Action Chess, Blitz Chess, Bullet Chess, Rapid Chess, Speed Chess

Rank

A horizontal row on the Chess board.

Numbered from White's side of the board from 1 to 8.

See: File

A player's position in a club or tournament.

Rated Game

Games that are used by the USCF for calculating Rating.

Rated Player

Every competitive chess player gets a rating after 4 tournament games.

See: Class, Rating, Unrated Player

Rating

A national numerical score that signifies a player's strength compared to other chess players.

See: Class, Rated Player, Unrated Player.

Removing the Guard (Removing the Defender)

This term refers to a tactic. You may want to make a move or capture one piece, but there is something else defending it. If you can “Remove the Defender”, then the other piece or move might be valid.

Repetition of Position

A condition when the pieces on the board are in the same place three times.

It usually occurs with Perpetual Check.

A Score Sheet (noation) is necessary to claim a Draw by Repetition

Resign

To give up. To stop playing.

Rook

The Rook looks like a castle. On any turn; a Rook may move horizontally (left or right) across the board, or vertically (up or down).

On any turn; the Rook can only move in one direction.

A Rook always can cover 14 squares. Estimated value (5 Points).

Round

A match in a tournament.

Round Robin

A tournament where all players play each other. Color and Order of play is found in the “*Official Rules of Chess*”

See: Quad

Rules

The laws and procedures that govern the game of chess

Many rules are in the “USCF OFFICAL RULES OF CHESS”

The Tournament Director also has discretion to enforce rules and procedures

Sacrifice (SACK)

Giving up something of a higher value for a greater future expected return.

Scholar’s Mate

(A ‘classic’ 4 move checkmate attacking F7 with the queen and protected by the Bishop.

Scholastic Tournament

Open to students. Prizes are usually trophies or non-money awards.

*School Mates*

OLD USCF magazine for players less than 7th grade.

Now called Chess Life for Kids.

See: *Chess Life*

Score Sheet

What the moves of the game is being recorded on.

Score Sheets belong to the tournament organizer and a player may request to borrow your score sheet (on his time).

See: Notation

Score Group

In a Swiss Tournament, after each round, players are grouped by their cumulative score from the prior rounds for the next round pairings.

By the end of a tournament, the winner bracket gets smaller and smaller. It is based on a “Binary Split Pattern (and assuming no draws) a winner can be obtained: There are rules for color, pairings and byes.

3 Rounds for 8 players

4 Rounds for 16 players

5 Rounds for 32 players

Sealed Move

If players can not finish a game in a given time, the game can be postponed (adjourned). The player who’s turn it is will write his move and seals it in an envelope and gives to the TD. This sealed envelope is opened when play resumes. This is usually not used as often in larger tournaments because “unfinished” games would affect pairings:

See: Swiss Tournament, Score Group, Sudden Death, Time Control

Section

In a large tournament, the players may be broken down into smaller groups. Mostly decided by Rating Class, but School Grade and Age are other common ways to define sections.

Smaller sections allow for less rounds to be played to find a winner or to make pairings more equitable:

Siamese Chess

A ‘Team’ variation of two players. Each playing opposite colors.

Captured pieces are be given to the ‘Partner’ to place on his board.

There are many variations and ‘House Rules’ for how to play.

See: Bug House Chess, Doubles Chess

Simul

Short for 'Simultaneous'. A form of chess where one player plays multiple players at a time, usually playing in a circle and making a move (or quick series of moves) on each board.

Skewer Attack

A technique where an attack is made on one piece, and when the piece is moved, there is another attack on a piece behind it. Usually with a check.

See: X-Ray Attack, Pin

Skittles Room

'CHESS FOR FUN', or area at a tournament where players can go between rounds to review their games, study, or play fun chess.

Analysis of games IS NOT allowed in a tournament area.

Smothered Mate

A checkmate position when the king is boxed in or trapped by other pieces.

Speed Chess (

See: Action Chess, Blitz Chess, Bullet Chess, Rapid Chess and Quick Chess

Stalemate

A position that occurs where the King is not under attack, but he cannot make any legal move that does not put the King in check.

A player may not make a move that puts the King in danger.

Strategy

A plan for how to play (Open, Closed, Trade, Exchange)

Sudden Death

A time control where the clock determines the outcome.

No number of moves is required.

Other rules and penalties apply in “Sudden Death” situations.

See: Clock and Time Control.

Swindle

A clever move (trick or trap) where a player is able to convert a lost position into something positive.

Swiss System Tournament

A tournament where winners and losers keep being placed in brackets (Score Groups) of equal strength after each round.

It takes 2N rounds for a winner to be selected. 8 players = 23

16 Players (4 rounds) 32 Players (5 rounds) 64 Players (6 Rounds)

The format gets its name from a tournament held at Zurich in 1895, and it continues to be a popular tournament format.

Tactics

Moves and ideas to carry out the plan or strategy.

Pins, Skewers, Remove the Defeneder, Pawn Chains,

TD

Tournament Director. The person in charge of running a tournament, enforcing the rules, determining pairings, arbitration of disputes and following other standards and rules for competitive chess.

Club, Local, Senior, National, International)

Tie Breaks

Various systems used in a tournament when multiple people have the same final score. Usually for the purpose of a trophy or title. Defined in *USCF Rules of Chess*.

The prize funds are combined and shared equally

Time Control

A player must make a defined number of moves in a stated time or the game is lost. Normal controls are 20/60 (20 moves in 60 minutes), 30/90 (30 moves in 90 minutes), Game/60 (1 hour to play the entire game). Each player is given a specified amount of time. Thus a game of 20/60 could last two hours. Normally there is a secondary time control such as Game/60 to ensure the game is finished. There may also be a Time Delay to allow for response time from making the move to pushing the clock.

Timer (ClocK)

A device used to measure amount of time used in a game (Time Controls)

Touch Move Rule

If you touch a piece (or a piece of your opponent’s) without saying ADJUST, your opponent may require that you make a move with that piece.

It has to be a legal move. For example, you cannot move a piece if it would place the king in check. Accidental knocking over of apiece is not considered a Touch Move.

Tournament

An organized competition between chess players.

See: Swiss, Round Robin, Invitational, Open, Closed

Trap

Setting up a position or making a series of moves that allows for the capture of a piece.

Undeveloped Piece

A piece that is in its original position or on a square that is not useful.

Unrated Player

A competitive chess player who has not been published in the USCF Rating Supplement. Four games must be played before a player is no longer “Unrated”. Even after 4 games have been played, there can be a delay in getting them sent in and entered before the player competes in their next tournament. Unrated players are usually restricted from “winning” the grand prize in a tournament.

USCF

United States Chess Federation

The official organization that oversees tournament rules and standards for competitive chess in the United States.

Address: USCHESS.org

See: F.I.D.E.

USCF Id

An 8 digit code assigned to USCF members.

The number is for LIFE. Once you have a number, you always have a number, even if you do not play for a period of time.

Variations

Different ways to play a combination of moves.

See: Book Moves.

Wall Chart

A list of players in a tournament and the result of their games.

Usually will show: player's name, rating, color played, opponent and result.

Waiting Move

A move that has no immediate significance except to allow the other player to move. Sometimes forcing a zugzwang position.

Weak Square

A square that is not very well defended or supported by other pieces.

White / Black

The general term for the 'LIGHT' colored pieces and squares.

Won Position

A position in a game where the player should not be able to lose.

See: Lost Position

X-ray Attack

A technique where an attack is made on one piece, and when the piece is moved, there is another attack on a piece behind it. Usually with a check.

See: Skewer Attack, Pin

Zugzwang

A German word meaning a compulsion to move or making a move under duress.

Usually with King and Pawn endings.

Zwischenzug

A German word used to mean a surprise move (or sometimes a ‘Waiting move’) that forces the opponent into a zugzwang position.