

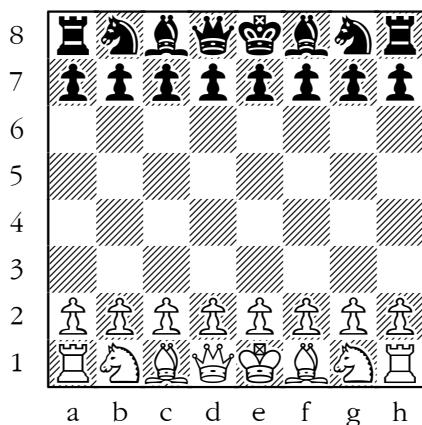
Algebraic Chess Notation: Reading and Writing Chess Moves

by Steven Craig Miller

Chess notation is a code that describes chess moves and positions. Learning chess notation is important for three reasons. (1) Keeping score (recording moves) with chess notation will aid you in settling questions and disagreements that may come up during a game (especially for tournament games). (2) Keeping score will allow you to study your game afterwards (perhaps with a stronger player who can help you better understand how to play chess). (3) Knowing how to read chess notation will allow you to read and study the games of others.

The most common and easiest type of chess notation is *algebraic*. Older chess books used a *descriptive* chess notation. But since 1981, the World Chess Federation (FIDE) has recognized only algebraic notation. And today, the vast majority of chess publishers publish only in algebraic notation.

(Black's Side of the Board)



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

(White's Side of the Board)

Grid-reference System for Location

Algebraic notation is a simple grid-reference system for recording chess moves. Each square on the board is identified by a combination of a lowercase letter and a number. The files (vertical columns) are lettered *a* to *h* from left to right as seen from White's side of the board (they are lettered from *h* to *a* from left to right as seen from Black's side of the board). The ranks (horizontal rows) are numbered 1 to 8 starting with the rank closest to White's edge of the board.

How to Write Down Pawn Moves

e4

exd5

e8=Q

For pawn moves, one only needs to write down the new location using lowercase letters, for example: *e4*. For pawn captures, one writes the file from which the pawn originated, "x" for capture, and then its new location

(using all lowercase letters). For example, if a pawn located at e4 captures a pawn located at d5, one would write: *exd5*. If a pawn moves to e8 and promotes to a queen, one would write: *e8=Q*.

How to Write Down Piece Moves

Nf3

Nbd7

Nxg5

To write a move, one needs to write the abbreviation for the piece moved using an **uppercase** letter, followed by the location, to where the piece was moved, using a **lowercase** letter and number. The standard abbreviations for pieces are: K = king, Q = queen, B = bishop, N = knight, and R= rook. Please note that the abbreviation for a knight is “N” and **not** “K”, nor “Kt” (this is to avoid confusion with “K” for king). For example, to indicate that a knight was moved to f3, one would write: *Nf3* (the “N” is uppercase, and the “f” is lowercase). It greatly helps readability if one consistently uses uppercase letters for pieces and lowercase letters to indicate files.

If there are two similar pieces which could move to the same square, one adds the distinguishing file or rank. For example, if one has a knight on b8 and a knight on f6, both could move to d7. If one moves the knight at b8 to d7, one would write: *Nbd7* (which means “the knight on the b-file moved to d7”). This is usually a problem only for knights and rooks. When you move a knight or rook, check to see if your other knight/rook could move to the same square. If so, add clarification to your notation.

If a knight captures a piece located at g5, one would write *Nxg5*. If there were two knights which could capture on g5 and the capturing knight was located on f3, one would write: *Nfxg5* (which means “the knight on the f-file captured at g5”).

Check and Checkmate

Bxf7+

Bxf7#

If a move puts the opponent’s king in **check**, the plus sign (“+”) can be added. For example, if a bishop on c4 captures a pawn on f7 and puts the opponent’s king in check, the move can be written: *Bxf7+* (which means “a bishop captured on f7 and gave check”). If a move delivers **checkmate**, the octothorp, also known as “number sign” or “pound sign,” (“#”) can be added, for example, *Bxf7#* (which means “a bishop captured on f7 and gave mate”).

Castling

0-0

0-0-0

Kingside castling is written as *0-0*, and queenside castling is written as *0-0-0*.

Result

1-0

1/2-1/2

0-1

To indicate the result of a game you may add to your scoresheet one of the following: 1-0 means that White won, $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ means that the game was drawn, and 0-1 means that Black won.