

# Tactile wooden Chess set (GB97)

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Please retain these instructions for future reference. These instructions are also available in other formats.

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**This Chess set is not a toy and is not intended to be used by children, therefore should not be used by children under the age of 14 years without adult supervision.**

## General description

This Chess set is not to competition specification. If you require a board to play in competitions, please contact the Braille Chess Association.

In order for a blind person to play Chess, some of the rules have been slightly modified. These modifications have been approved by the International Governing Body of Chess, FIDE. A full list of the rules which apply when a blind person plays against another blind person or when a blind person plays against a sighted person can be obtained from the Braille Chess Association.

This association can offer advice on all aspects of Chess for blind and partially sighted people. It organises over-the-board, e-mail and postal tournaments and runs a library of Chess books and study material in braille and various audio formats. It also produces a number of periodicals devoted to Chess in various audio formats. Their website covers lots of practical help and support [www.braillechess.org.uk](http://www.braillechess.org.uk)

Membership is open to all blind and partially sighted individuals; associate membership is open to sighted friends and supporters. For further information regarding membership and concessions for under 25’s, please email: membership@braillechess.org.uk

## Items supplied with the Tactile wooden Chess set

Large wooden board

Plastic case containing wooden Chess pieces

Large print instructions

## Orientation

The wooden board has a hole in each square for the playing pieces to slot into. The wooden board measures approximately 33cm x 33cm x 1.7cm. The light coloured squares are all recessed to denote them from the dark squares.

## Chess

The following is a summary of the rules of Chess - just enough to get you started. Some adaptations have been made to the print rules which are included in Chess sets for sighted people. Namely, play on two boards, announcing moves and the "touch and move" rule.

If you require more detailed instructions, the Chess association have audio rules.

## The Chess board

Chess is played on a square board of 64 squares coloured alternately black and white. For the benefit of blind players, the black squares are raised and all the squares are drilled with a hole into which the pieces fit so that they will not fall over when touched.

The rows of squares are known as ranks and files. The files are the rows of squares from side to side of the board (left to right) and the ranks are the rows of squares from bottom to top of the board or from the near end to the far end. The ranks are identified by numbers from one to eight and the files are identified by letters from A to H. Thus, the square in the left hand corner of the board nearest to the player with the white pieces, is named A1 and the rest of the squares in the first rank, travelling from left to right, are: B1, C1, D1, E1, F1, G1 and H1. The squares in the A file leading away from the player with the white pieces are named: A1, A2, A3, etc up to A8. In the starting position, the white pieces occupy the first and second rank and the black pieces occupy the seventh and eighth rank.

This version is supplied with a wooden board with holes in each square for the playing pieces to slot into. The board measures approximately 33 cm x 33 cm x 1.7 cm. The dark/black squares are raised to differentiate them from the white squares.

## The Chess pieces

If you are not familiar with, and do not immediately recognise the individual chess pieces, please study the following until you are able to identify them.

A Chess set consists of two teams of pieces or "men", with 16 pieces in each team. One, known as the white and the other known as the black. Each team consists of the following men: one King, one Queen, two Rooks (Castles), two Knights, two Bishops and eight pawns.

To differentiate the black wooden pieces from the white, the black pieces have a small metal tip on the top of each of the playing pieces. You can feel this as you run your finger over the top of the piece.

### The King and Queen

The King is slightly taller than the Queen and has a shape of a cross standing upright on his head. The Queen has a bobbled edge around her head representing a coronet.

### The Knights

These are easy to identify as they are shaped like a horse's head.

### The Rooks

These are shaped like a tower of a castle, thus justifying their alternative name.

### The Bishops

These have a bulbous head with a cut in the side meant to represent a mitre, or bishop's hat.

### The Pawns

These are the remaining eight smaller round-headed pieces.

## Setting up the pieces

Place the chess board in front of you with a black square in the left and near corner and a white square in the right hand near corner. (**Note:** the black squares are the raised squares). Now, set out the white pieces, start with the rank nearest to you. This is the first row of squares from left to right.

Place the two Rooks in the corner squares, A1 and H1, now the two Knights in the next squares in B1 and G1, now the two Bishops in the next squares in C1 and F1, now place the Queen on D1 and the King on E1. Note that the Queen always starts the game on a square of her own colour and the King always starts the game on a square of the opposite colour. Now, set out the eight white Pawns along the second rank on each square from A2 to H2.

Now, set up the black pieces at the far end of the board. The Rooks in the two corners on A8 and H8, the Knights on the next squares B8 and G8, the Bishops on the next squares C8 and F8, the Queen on her own colour, D8 and the King on E8. Now, set up the black Pawns on the seventh rank on each square, from A7 to H7. The two teams, or armies, are now facing each other and you are ready to start.

## Rules of play

One player takes white, the other black. The players move alternately and white always has the first move. No-one is allowed to miss a move and once a piece is raised from the board, it must be moved. Similarly, once a piece has been moved to another square and the player's hand has been taken away, the move cannot be changed (**Note:** this is a slight modification to the rules which apply to sighted players which state "once a piece has been touched, it must be moved, etc.").

The different pieces move in different ways, but no piece may be moved to a square occupied by a piece of its own colour. When a piece is moved to a square occupied by one of the opposing team, the latter is taken, or "captured" and removed from the board and out of play. The King, however, is never removed from the board - see rules concerning “Check”.

Before you start your first game, you should learn some of the more important rules of play. The following is not, by any means, a list of all the rules, but the essential points for a learner are covered.

A move consists of picking up a piece and transferring it to another square. The move is completed when the player has removed his/her hand from the piece being moved.

Once a move has been completed, that move cannot be changed.

If a player lifts one of the opponent's pieces from the board, that piece must be captured, provided there is a legal way of doing this.

If an illegal move is made and discovered later in the game, the pieces must be reset in the position which existed immediately before the illegal move was made and the game continues with a legal move using the piece which was used for the illegal move. If the position before the illegal move cannot be decided, the game is declared void.

Players should not comment on moves whilst the game is in progress nor may they refer to any written notes which bear upon the game. Players may not seek advice or information from onlookers while the game is in progress.

## How the pieces move

**The King:** The King is the most important "man" on the board and his capture signals the end of the game. His mobility, however, is very limited. He may only move one square at a time, but in any direction.

**The Rook or "Castle":** The Rook may move any number of squares forward, backward or sideways but not diagonally. He may not pass over any other piece.

**The Bishop:** Bishops may move any number of squares forwards or backward in a diagonal line, but they may not pass over any other piece.

**The Queen:** The Queen is the most powerful piece on the board. She may move any number of squares backward or forward, horizontally as the Rook does, or diagonally as the Bishop does. She may not, however, pass over other pieces.

**The Knights:** Knights are allowed a complicated move pattern. They are the only men which are allowed to jump over other pieces, either of their own colour or of the opposing team's colour. Their move pattern takes the shape of a print capital letter L or of a braille letter V, i.e. two squares forward and one to the left or right, two squares backward and one to the left or right, two squares left and one forward or back, and two squares right and one forward or back.

**The Pawns:** Pawns are the only pieces in the team which cannot move backward. They are also the only pieces which capture in a method which is different to their normal move. They move one square straight forward except on their first move when they have the option of moving either one or two squares straightforward. Each pawn has this option on its first move. A Pawn captures an opponent's piece by moving one square diagonally forward. A Pawn may not capture when moving straight forward, but only by this diagonal movement. Pawns are special in that, if a Pawn reaches the far end of the board, you can promote it to the piece of your choice: Queen, Rook, Knight or Bishop.

### The "En Passant" rule

This is a rule which applies only to Pawns. If, when making its first move, a Pawn moving two squares forward, lands beside a Pawn of the opposition, it can be taken "en passant", e.g. a black Pawn moving from E7 to E5 lands beside a white Pawn on D5. The black Pawn has moved over E6 which is controlled by the white Pawn on D5. Therefore, the white Pawn can capture on E6. The white Pawn is placed on E6 and the black Pawn is removed. (**Note:** this capture can only be carried out on the move when it becomes possible. It may not be deferred to a later move).

### Capturing a piece

Capturing is entirely optional. Even if you are able to take a piece, you are not compelled to do so. When a piece moves onto a square occupied by one of the opposing team, the opponent's piece is taken or "captured" and removed from the board. All the pieces, with the exception of the Pawns, can take opposing pieces by moving in their particular way onto a square occupied by a piece of the opposing team.

Pawns, although they move straight forward can only take diagonally forward, e.g. a white Pawn on the D4 square can take an opposing piece on the E5 or C5 square. (See also "Taking En Passant").

### Castling

Castling is a special combination move involving the King and Rook, which is allowed once to each side in a game provided the following conditions are observed. It is the only time that a King may move more than one square at a time.

To castle, the King moves two squares towards the Rook and the Rook moves over the King and stops on the other side on the next square to the King. (**Please note:** when castling on the King's side, the King is moved to the G file and the Rook to the F file, but when castling the Queen's side, the King is moved to the C file and the Rook to the D file. Castling is only allowed provided that (a) squares between the King and Rook are not occupied; (b) neither the King nor the Rook have been moved previously in the game; (c) a King may not castle to get out of check, nor may a King castle into check, nor may a King castle over a square which is controlled by an enemy piece which would, in effect, be castling through check (**note:** a definition of check follows).

### Check and Checkmate

When a King stands in a position where he is threatened with capture from his opponent's next move, he is said to be "in check". A King must never be left "in check". A player whose King is "in check" must, therefore, do one of three things:

(a) Move the King onto a square where he is not "in check".

(b) Take the opposing piece which is checking the King.

(c) Place another piece so as to shield the King from the piece which is checking him.

If none of these things are possible, then the King is "check-mated" and the game is finished. (**Note:** the King may not take the checking piece if, by so doing, he becomes "in check" by another piece. The use of another piece as a shield for the King is useless if the checking piece is a Knight, as the Knight can jump over other pieces).

### Other ways to end a game

A game of Chess does not always end with a "checkmate". It is normal for a player whose position has become so hopeless that the end is inevitable, to resign.

### A draw is reached when:

(a) Both players agree that the position is equal and that neither can find a win.

(b) Where "checkmate" is no longer possible because insufficient pieces are left on the board to force "checkmate".

(c) When stalemate is reached, e.g. a player's King is not in check, but no legal move can be made by the player whose turn it is to move with the King or with any other piece.

### Some examples of "Check", "Checkmate", Getting out of "Check" and "Stalemate"

"Check": Set up both sets of pieces in the start position. Now remove black's Pawn from E7 from the board and move black's Knight from B8 to C6 and black's Bishop from F8 to C5. Now, move white's Pawn from E2 to E4 and place the white Queen on E5. The black King is in check as it is threatened with capture from white's next move.

Getting out of "Check": The black King can get out of "check" in the following three ways:

(a) The King can move from E8 to F8 and it is no longer in "check".

(b) By capturing the piece which is checking the King, e.g. Knight from C6 takes Queen on E5.

(c) By using a piece as a shield. Interposing a piece between the King and the Queen which is checking him. There are four possibilities: Knight from C6 to E7; Knight from G8 to E7; Bishop from C5 to E7 or Queen from D8 to E7.

"Checkmate": Return to the start position. Move black's Pawn from E7 to E5, black's Knight from B8 to C6 and black's Bishop from F8 to C5. Now, move white's Pawn from E2 to E4; white's Bishop from F1 to C4 and white's Queen from D1 to F3. It is white's turn to move and white moves the Queen from F3 to F7 capturing the Pawn. This is "checkmate" as the enemy King cannot move into a square where he is not in "check" from the Queen. He cannot capture the Queen as he would then be in "check" by the Bishop and no piece can be interposed.

"Stalemate": Stalemate is reached when the player whose turn it is to move cannot make any legal move with the King or with any other piece. Clear all the pieces from the board and set up the following position: white King on E6, white Pawns on A4, B5 and E7, black King on E8, black Pawns on A5 and B6. It is black's turn to move. As you will see, although the black King is not "in check", there is no legal move that he can make as wherever he moves, he'll be in check. Also, there are no moves possible for the black Pawns. This position is "stalemate" and the game is a draw. (**Note:** if it was white's turn to move, the game would not be "stalemate" as there are a number of legal moves open to the white King).

## Guidance for blind players

**Two boards:** When two blind players play against each other or when a blind player plays against a sighted player, it is normal to use two boards. This enables each player to study the position continually without hindering his/her opponent. Each player is responsible for moving both the white and the black pieces on the board on which that player is playing.

**Announcing the moves:** In order that the game can progress, you will need to be able to announce the move you have made to your opponent. This is done by using the name of the piece and the letter and number of the rank and file from which the piece has moved and to which it is moving, e.g. Knight from G1 to F3. It is not necessary to say the name of the piece which is moving when it is a Pawn, e.g. E2 to E4. (**Note:** when you feel ready to study from written materials, you can obtain a copy of the braille Chess code from RNIB Helpline. Further information and advice can be obtained from the Braille Chess Association).

Now you are ready to start your first game. RNIB publish a quarterly braille chess magazine which will help you brush up your chess skills so you get to checkmate more often! It’s equally suited to both amateurs and enthusiasts, featuring reviews of games, chess problems and helpful tips. Please call the RNIB helpline if you would like to subscribe.

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