

Queens. The Queen is *very* powerful in this game. It is not uncommon for a Queen to travel 12 spaces or more in a single move. Rooks and bishops are also strong, but the Queen is murder, especially on the edges of the board where she can swoop about and make trouble.

Fool's Mate. A King by itself on a corner or an edge is an easy target. All that is needed is for an enemy Queen to park herself next to him, especially on a diagonal. He is then trapped, and he cannot move out of check.

In Figure 4, the black Queen is able to put the white King in an inescapable check with one move. It can move diagonally, right through the open space and its own pawn, beside the white King. Because the white King will then be trapped, it cannot move out of check, nor can it capture the Queen that holds it in check.

Fast Two-Player Game

Each player gets 8 tiles: three pawns, and one each of the other five pieces. Setup and play go exactly as above.

You can also try this with three players, and four pawns each, but there's very little margin for error; the first player to slip is likely to get slaughtered, and whoever took him will then have an overpowering advantage.

More Variants

The Polite Game. Players must not only announce check or threat, but also tell other players who is threatening whom. The polite game is recommended for players who are just learning the game.

Sudden Death. Instead of announcing "check," players may pounce on each other's kings with abandon.

Time Limits. To keep the game moving, institute a time limit on moves. One minute allows participants a brief moment to consider possibilities; 30 seconds (or less) will make them panic! Any game with time limits is a "Sudden Death" game.

Grid. Can you play *Tile Chess* on a homemade grid? Yes; some people prefer this, as it makes the lines of attack clearer. You can also lay down markers to trace diagonals on the playing field when you are playing without a grid. If your grid has borders, you are playing the Borders variant, below.

Borders. It is possible to designate borders for the game and make it illegal to move beyond them. For the most part, this only makes sense if you are playing on a really, really small table or homemade grid.

Blood Lust. Everyone must take a piece every move unless it is impossible to do so.

Mad Blood Lust. As above, but anyone who cannot take a piece must sacrifice one of their own (unless doing so would violate the Unity Rule).

Friendly Fire. In this variant, you can take your own pieces if it is strategically advisable to get them out of the way.

Random Layout. Shuffle the tiles, except for the kings, and deal them out in a rectangle, or a spiral from the center. Then play five turns. Then place the kings. Then play normally. This has the advantage of being a quick setup, but will give some players much better initial layouts than others.

More or Fewer Pawns. Dropping one or two pawns from each team tightens the playing field; dropping three or four pawns makes it very difficult to create impregnable buffer zones. Optionally, adding one or more pawns can create a larger and more complex playing field. Experiment to find what works best for you.

Movement During the Layout Period. Some players might want a variation where they could choose to move, instead of placing a piece, during the initial layout period. *We have not found such variants to be playable, and we don't recommend them.*

Knightmare Tile Chess

Mix both games for *truly* chaotic play. Before beginning, 20 *Knightmare Chess* cards (listed below) must be either removed from the deck or redefined slightly. Remember: the Unity Rule must always be observed, no matter what the cards say.

Because there are multiple opponents, the game works best when everyone draws from a common deck. Unless a card specifies that it affects everything around a playing piece, assume that you can only harass one of your opponents with it.

The following cards are completely unusable with a *Tile Chess* layout: Betrayal, Dark Mirror, Dungeon, Earthquake, Figure Dance, Forced March, Ghostwalk, Guardian, Long Jump, Man Trap, Rebirth, Squaring the Circle, Toll, and Winged Victory.

Redefine any reference to "forward" or "backward" to mean any orthogonal direction in Breakthrough, Cowardice, Fanatic, and Onslaught. Redefine the pawn's movement to mean any diagonal direction in Crab. Redefine "edge of board" to mean the edge of the pieces grouped in play in Under Elf Hill.

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Each player chooses a color. Decide who will place the first piece and go clockwise around the table, with each player placing a piece in turn until all are placed. The first player to place a piece is also the first to move, after all the pieces are placed.

After the first piece is placed on the table, each new tile must be placed adjacent to at least one existing tile, either on a side or on a corner. A player may place his tiles in any order. The exception to this is the King, which must always be placed last. The King cannot be placed in check or next to another King. If any player notices that a King's initial position puts it in check, he must say so immediately.

Table Talk

Any multi-player game must address the issues of alliances and table talk. Different groups will have different styles – which is why this is something to be discussed when starting the game. Our own house rules:

- ♣ Players cannot overtly coordinate their strategy.
- ♣ You may suggest a move to an opponent if that move hurts you, for the sake of a better game . . . but you cannot suggest a move to an opponent for the purpose of harming a third player.
- ♣ Threats to "suicide" on another player are not allowed.
- ♣ Anyone detecting an illegal move must speak up immediately!

Movement

Rules for All Pieces

1. *The Unity Rule.* All pieces must end their moves adjacent to another piece, either on a side or a corner. No piece can be left stranded by itself, nor can one group of pieces be separate from another. Throughout the game, the pieces in play must remain a single, connected whole. You may never "break the board."

2. Pieces can move *through* any other pieces of their own color.

3. With the exception of the knight, in its normal jumping move, pieces cannot move over pieces of another color.

4. Pieces can move over unoccupied space. This may leave them in "empty space" *during* their move, as long as they end the move touching another piece.

5. Pieces must end their moves either by landing on an unoccupied space, or by taking a piece of another color.

Moves for Individual Pieces

With the exception of pawns (see below), the pieces move as they do in regular chess.

Kings (K) may move one square in any direction, forward, back, left, right, or diagonally. They may not move into check. They may move into threat (see *Attacks*, p. 2).

Queens (Q) may move an unlimited number of spaces in any direction.

Bishops (B) may move an unlimited number of spaces in any diagonal direction.

Knights (N) leap from one corner to the diagonally opposite corner of a rectangle three squares by two. Because their move is a leap, they may pass over other pieces, whether they are the same or different colors.

Rooks (R) may travel an unlimited number of spaces forward, backward, left, or right.

Pawns (P) can move one space forward, back, left or right to an empty space, or capture one space in any *diagonal* direction.

Introduction

Welcome to *Tile Chess*. The pieces are familiar, but the play is very different . . .

♣ **No board!** The pieces move in unlimited virtual space. Pawns can move in any direction.

♣ **No checkmate!** Capture the opposing Kings and take over their surviving pieces.

♣ **No waiting for development!** You can move *through* your own pieces.

♣ **No two-player limit!** As many as six can play.

Components

This game includes these rules and six sets of 16 pieces each: 1 King, 1 Queen, 2 Bishops, 2 Knights, 2 Rooks, and 8 Pawns. There is no board.

These rules assume that the players are already familiar with the rules and terminology of chess.

Number of Players

Tile Chess plays fastest with three to four players. Five to six players makes for a slower but more complex game, with more opportunities for alliances and all-out killing sprees. One option if you have six players and want a faster game is to divide the pieces to create two three-player games.

You can also play *Tile Chess* as a two-player game. This plays more like regular chess, except that all strategy based on the standard chess layout is useless.

Starting the Game

Decide how many pawns you will use. With multiple players, starting with fewer pawns will make for a faster and more aggressive game. We suggest that games with two players use eight pawns, games with three players use six pawns, and games with four or more players use only four pawns. No matter how many players are in the game, you can always make it faster by taking out more pawns!

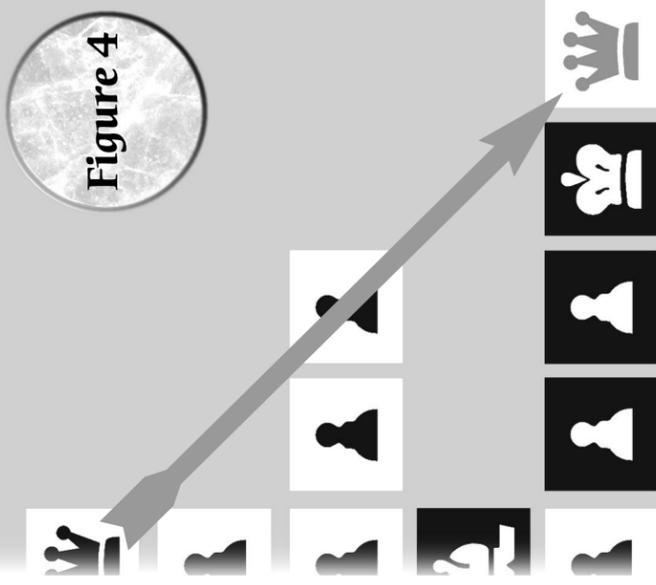


Figure 4

For more fun, information, and High Weirdness, Visit our website!

www.sjgames.com – Our general company site.
www.sjgames.com/pyramid – *Pyramid Magazine* . . . about all kinds of games!
www.sjgames.com/tilechess – More information and variants about this game.
www.sjgames.com/knightmare – *Knightmare Chess*, another great chess variant!

In Figure 1, the pawn can move in any of the directions marked by a solid arrow. It can capture in any direction marked by an open arrow.

Skipped Moves

You may not *choose* to skip a move, but there are three situations in which a player *must* skip his move, without moving a piece:

1. If he is in check and has no escape. (Even if he has other pieces that can move, he must skip his move if his King cannot escape from check.);
2. If all his pieces are *trapped* (see below) or have no legal move; and/or
3. If any move that he makes would put his King in check.

Special Moves

Because there is no board, there are none of the special chess moves that relate to position. You cannot castle. Pawns do not get an initial two-square move, cannot capture *en passant*, and cannot be promoted.

Attacks

Captures

As in regular chess, pieces capture when they land on a space occupied by a piece of another color. Captured pieces are removed from play and replaced by the capturing piece.

Trapping

A piece is *trapped* if it is the only link connecting one piece (or a group of pieces) to the rest. If it moves from that spot, it “breaks the board” in two, violating the Unity Rule. Therefore, it can’t move! If there is a long line of pieces stretching out from the center of the playing field, there is a good chance that every piece in that line (except the last!) is trapped. A piece that is not trapped is *mobile*.

Look at Figure 2. The knight cannot move without separating the King adjacent to it from the rest of the board. Thus, the knight is *trapped*. It must stay where it is.

Pieces may also be “partially trapped,” able to move back and forth between two or three spots, but not able to leave the area. The two pawns below the knight in Figure 2 can move, but only one space left or right, because moving any farther would separate the pieces below either pawn from the pieces above it.

And note that the Queen is *not* trapped; if she moves away, every other piece will still have (at least) a diagonal connection to the rest of the board.

Trapping enemy pieces is a powerful tactic. A trapped piece can be taken with impunity . . . but often the capturing piece will now, itself, be trapped.

Threat

Threats occur when a trapped piece has an opponent’s King within its line of capture. The King is not in immediate danger and is free to ignore the threat. If the threatening piece becomes mobile again, the attacking player must announce “check.” Note that a King can move into threat, but not into check.

In Figure 3, the white rook has the black King in its line of movement. However, the black King is not in check from the white rook because the white rook is trapped by the pawn below it. Thus, the black King is merely under “threat.”

Check

This is a move which places a piece in a position where it can attack a King. The attacker *must* announce “check” and specify the intended victim(s). It is possible to put more than one opponent in check at the same time!

Check can occur by a regular move, or by a move which un-traps a piece, freeing it to attack.

Going back to Figure 3, you will note the black King *is* in check from the white knight because the black King is on a square the white knight can reach, and the white knight is not trapped in any way. This is the definition of “check.” (Note also that if the King moves away, that knight will probably take the black Queen.)

The defender must try to escape check, using one of the following methods:

1. Move the King to a square where it’s not in check from that piece or another;
2. Block the attack with another piece;
3. Trap or take the offending piece.

Third-Party Checks

If A is under threat from B, and C makes a move that frees the threatening piece, then C (as the moving player) must announce check. (If he fails to do so, though, B must announce it himself or lose the option to follow it up). What happens now depends on who moves next: A or B.

If A, the player in check, moves first, then he has an opportunity to protect himself.

If B, the player whose piece was freed to give check, moves first, then B can take A’s King and take over his pieces. Thus, this kind of check is probably a poor move for C.

Layered Checks

If A checks C, and B checks A, is C out of check? Yes, unless A has a move that takes C’s King *and* protects his own King. Since A has to use his next move to guard himself, he can’t take C’s King, so there is no check.

Is it moving into check if you make a move that would subject your King to capture *if not for the fact* that the player who would threaten it is in check himself? Treat this situation as being the same as moving a King into threat. It is legal, but risky.

Surprise Checks

You are obliged to announce when you check someone, or when you cause someone to be checked. However, it is easy to check someone accidentally, as when A makes a move that frees a piece of B’s, bearing on C’s King.

If you notice that an opponent has placed you in check, you are not required to point out the check if your opponent doesn’t notice it. In a polite game, you would choose to.

If you notice, between an opponent’s turn and your own, that you have that opponent in an unannounced check, you may not take the opponent’s King on that turn. That would deprive the opponent of the chance to respond to the check. You must instead announce the check and do something else.

Third-Party Announcements: If A checks B (without C’s help) and does not announce, but C notices the check, C is not required to point out the check. C *may* do so. If B still has a turn to respond, then C’s pointing out the check makes it a legal one, and B must respond. If B’s turn has already passed, then C may point out the check but only as a matter of conversation; A cannot take B’s King on that turn.

During initial setup, if any player notices that a King’s initial position puts it into check, he must say so immediately.

Improperly Announced Checks

If check is announced improperly (as, for instance, someone fails to notice that the “checking” piece is actually trapped), *anyone* can and should speak up to point out why the move is not check.

Kings Checking Kings

Unlike regular chess, a King can give check, and even capture. For this to happen, the victim King must be trapped. Another King can move next to it with impunity, and announce check. On its next move, it can capture the trapped King!

Capturing a King, and Winning

Unlike standard chess, kings are actually captured; there is no “checkmate.” When a King is taken, the capturing player immediately gains control of the defeated player’s remaining pieces. If possible, replace them with pieces of the capturing player’s color.

The game continues until only one player has a King remaining in play. That player is the winner.

Declining a King Capture

Although it is usually to your advantage to take an opponent’s King, there are times when it might be strategically unwise (for instance, if that opponent has few or no pieces worth capturing and your move is better spent elsewhere). Therefore, you can always choose not to take a King that you have in check if you wish to do so.

Stalemate

As in regular chess, if a sequence of moves is repeated three times, the game is a stalemated draw. Likewise, all players can agree to end a game without playing it out. In such cases, players can use the following point system to determine honors:

Queen: 12 points (even more valuable than in regular chess)
Rook: 5 points
Bishop: 3 points
Knight: 3 points
Pawn: 1 point

Strategy

Learning. Don’t take your first couple of games seriously. There is a learning curve here. In particular, no one gets setup right the first time. Because of this, we strongly recommend that new players play the “polite game” (see below) while they are learning the rules. We also suggest playing smaller games your first time or two; these will move a little faster even while you are learning.

Setup. In general, place your pawns first and your Queen next to last. You might want to reserve one pawn as a troublemaking sacrifice. If your bishops start on the same diagonal, they can support each other. If they start on different diagonals, they can cover more ground.

You should probably keep your pieces together during setup. The temptation to use major pieces to break up your foes’ “citadel” areas will more often than not be pointless sacrifice. If you divide your forces into two concentrations, you risk being defeated in detail.

Lurkers. Some people lurk in a corner, surrounded by an intimidating defense zone, and never venture out until the other players have fought their battles of attrition. While this is a valid strategy, lurkers can be downright annoying to everyone else. One means of countering chronic lurkers is to use either the “Fewer Pawns” or “Blood Lust” variants of the game (see below).

Pawn Walls. As in regular chess, a well-developed pawn wall can stave off attacks. Remember, you can move over your own pawns, but other players cannot. Pawns are generally most useful in the center of the playing field. Do not overlook your pawns when planning your offense. In addition to being guards and obstacles, they are slow but deadly attackers.

Power Blocks. In general, it is best to keep your pieces grouped together so that each piece is mobile. The more mobile you are, the better. Don’t let your pieces get strung out in a long, trapped line.

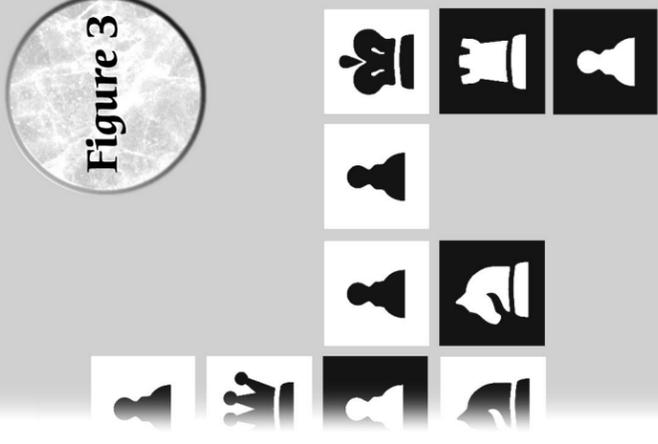


Figure 3



Figure 2

