

The background of the entire cover is a dark grey or black, featuring a repeating pattern of various chess pieces in a lighter grey color. The pieces include kings, queens, rooks, bishops, knights, and pawns, arranged in a grid-like fashion. Some pieces are slightly offset or faded, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Chess

JOKER

by Carl Chudyk

Rulebook ver. 1.0

Welcome to Chess JOKER!

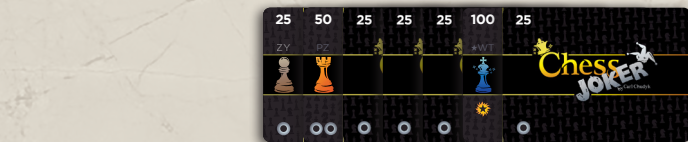
2 Players **20-60 mins**

256 Cards, 44 Pieces, Chessboard

Welcome to the world of **Chess JOKER!** The core is the classic 2-player game of Chess, paired with the wild tactical options presented by our deck of 256 Joke cards.

After each turn, you'll reveal the top card of the deck. On your next turn, you can either play your joke move (and score points - even if the card doesn't help you!) or take a normal chess move, discarding the card and drawing a new one. Sometimes the card's effect will be impossible, perhaps because your opponent blocked it. Or, it might be worth valuable Elo points but be disadvantageous. You need 800 to win, unless you checkmate your opponent first.

That's all part of the game - a mix of normal chess and joke moves, where you evaluate wild new tactical options every turn and make the best choices you can! Standard positions and chess openings go out the window quickly, and you'll have to think on your feet to succeed. And when you warp your knight across the board to capture a rook, you hope to leave your opponent saying "what a great joke!"



Chess Basics

If you're new to chess or need a quick refresher, we've got you covered! The diagrams of each piece's basic movements are to the right. You can even play a standard game of chess with these pieces.

White always plays first, and players alternate taking turns moving pieces until one player's king is checkmated - put into an inescapable position.

On your turn, you must select a piece, and move it. You can't move through friendly or enemy pieces on the way to your destination. If your piece lands on an enemy piece, it captures (removes) that piece from play.

A **pawn** moves forward one space, or two spaces if it is in its starting rank (row). A pawn captures by moving forward-diagonal one space. It cannot capture otherwise.

A **knight** jumps over two spaces (even if pieces are there) in an L, as shown to the right.

A **bishop** moves diagonally as far as it wants.

A **rook** moves horizontally or vertically as far as it wants.

A **queen** moves diagonally, horizontally, or vertically as far as it wants.

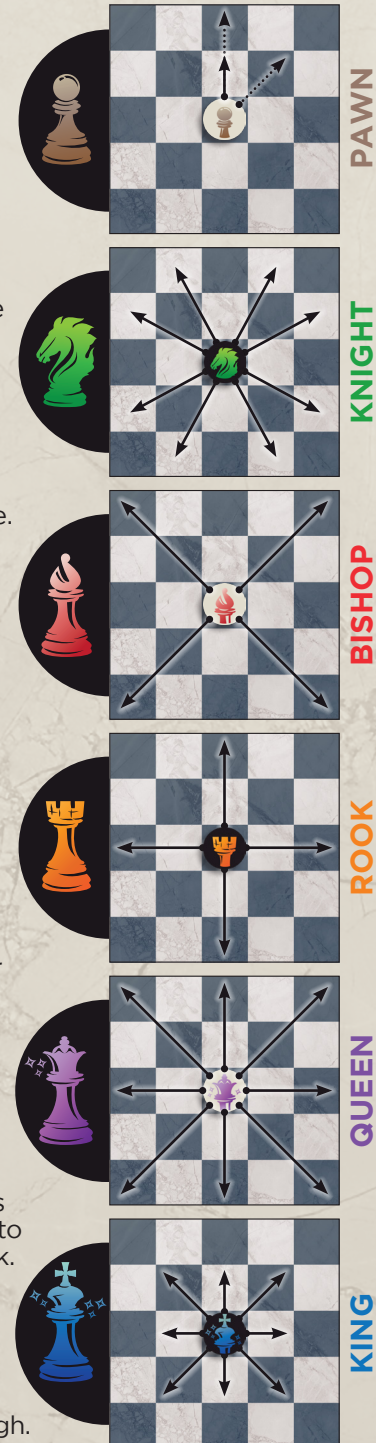
Your **king** moves one space in any of the 8 directions.

Your king is in check if an enemy piece could capture it on their next turn. You can never take a move that puts your king in check. If your turn starts with your king in check, you must make a move that ends the check threat. If you cannot, your king is checkmated, and your opponent has won!

Castle: Your king and rook can castle if neither has moved this game, the spaces between them are empty, and no space the king would move through is threatened. The king moves two spaces toward the rook, and the rook hops over the king to the space next to it. You can't castle while in check.

Promote: A pawn promotes if it ends a move in the opponent's home rank. It immediately becomes a knight, bishop, rook, or queen.

The full rules of chess can be found many places online! This should be enough to get started though.



Setup

Determine who will play with the white pieces and the black pieces, then setup the chess pieces on the chess board normally. The standard chess setup is shown on the next page. Square A1 should be on the left corner closest to the white player. Note that many of the pieces are double sided. Each player has 6 bishop/knights discs and 5 rook/queen discs, to allow for adding pieces easily during play.

Shuffle the 256 Joke cards and place them facedown in a draw deck beside the board. You can opt to play a Simple game by excluding the 128 Advanced cards - denoted by the star next to their card codes - from the deck.

As with a standard chess game, the white player will go first. On white's very first turn of the game, the Draw phase is skipped.

Turn Structure

- Last Stand:** If you have 3 or fewer pieces on the board, your opponent scores the top card of the deck, face-down for 25 Elo points.
- Play:** You may either take a normal chess move (and discard your card) or use the full effect of the card in front of you (and score your card, placing it face-up in your score pile). If you cannot use the full effect, you must take a normal chess move.
- Draw:** Place the top card of the deck face-up next to you.
- Check for Check:** Taking into consideration both the current state of the board and your newly drawn card, determine if the opponent is in check or checkmate. If they are checkmated, you win! If they are in check, they score the top card of the deck, face-down for 25 Elo points. If they are already at 775 Elo points and this would cause them to win, they do not score the card.

Winning / Game End

If you are ever at 800 or more Elo points, **you win immediately**. If you checkmate the enemy king, you win immediately.

Players can also resign or agree to a draw at any time. If a player has no legal move on their turn (including their card), the game is a stalemate and ends in a draw. If a player would draw a card and the deck is empty, the game ends in a draw.

Joke Cards

- Elo value
- Elo counting aids
- Card Code
- Card Effect
- Featured Piece
- Featured Piece Icon
- Supporting Piece Icons



Play Area



The majority of the cards in the deck use either the keyword Warp or Move to interact with your pieces, and they have very different meanings.

Warp: Move the piece by “teleporting” it - a warp can move from any square to any other square on the board, as described by the card. A warp can capture an enemy piece. Importantly, having a card with warp can often mean the enemy king is in check.



50

★UT

Warp your light-square **bishop** to threaten an enemy knight.

You (as black), have card [UT].

So, you pick up your light-square bishop, and place it in any square where it would now be threatening an enemy knight. In this case, it allows you to capture an enemy rook while doing so!

Move: Move the piece by the standard rules of chess, including potentially capturing. If you can't accomplish what the card asks with a standard move, you can't do it.



150

★SS

Move your pawn to your sixth rank and promote it to a bishop.

You (as white), have card [SS].

It requires you to have a pawn in your fifth rank, either with an empty space in front of it, or able to capture a piece diagonally, since those are the legal ways a pawn could move to the 6th rank. In this case, you're able to capture a pawn and upgrade to a bishop!

Add: Add the piece from the supply to the indicated location. An add can capture an enemy piece.

By: Adjacent, including diagonals (all 8 spaces).

Center square: One of the four squares at the center of the board (D4, D5, E4, E5).

Directly beside: Horizontally adjacent in the same rank, to the left or right.

Edge square: Any square on the edge of the board. Ranks 1/8 and files A/H.

File: vertical / column. Files are lettered A through H, left to right on the white player's side, H to A on the black player's side.

Immobile: A piece is immobile if it can make no legal standard chess move.

In front of / behind: Anywhere in the same file (vertical column). In front of is further away from you. Behind is closer to you.

Kingside: The four files on the king's side of the board (E F G H).

Move like an X: Move the piece by the standard rules of chess for the indicated piece type, including potentially capturing. Treat the piece as its own type afterward for the purposes of check and promotion.

Pawn terms: A pawn is doubled if there is another pawn of the same color in its file. Pawns are referred to by their file (ex. a c-pawn is any pawn in the c file).

Pinned: a piece is pinned to the king if removing it from the board would immediately place the king in check.

Queenside: The four files on the queen's side of the board. (A B C D).

Rank: horizontal / row. Ranks are numbered 1 through 8, with rank 1 being white's starting row, rank 8 being black's.

Same Way: A card that moves two pieces “the same way” means the same number of spaces in the same direction.

Threatened: a square (and the enemy piece on it, if any) is threatened by a piece if it could make a legal move to that square, ignoring pins and check.

Your Xth rank: For white, your ranks are as numbered. For black, if a card refers to “your first rank”, it means the rank closest to you (which is rank 8).

8 Check & Checkmate

You are in check at the end of a turn if your opponent has a piece that threatens the space your king is on, or if your opponent's face-up card threatens that space.

A pinned piece (or the King itself) still threatens all the spaces it could reach with a normal move or card effect, even if it would theoretically place the player in check.

You are checkmated (and lose the game) if you are in check and have no legal play (including your next card) that would escape check.

If your opponent places you in check, add the top card of the deck to your score pile, face-down, showing 25 points. You only do this once per turn, even if you are in check from multiple sources. If you are already at 775, you do not receive points. You cannot win by being placed in check.



25

Warp your **knight** to a square directly beside an enemy pawn.

★VY

You (as black), draw [VY] at the end of your turn.

Because the white king is directly beside a white pawn, your knight could warp there. This threatens the king's square, placing it in check.



150

Warp your king to a square with no empty squares by it.

NX

You (as black) draw [NX] at the end of your turn.

Because the white king is in a square with no empty squares by it, it is in check, and checkmate unless white has a card to escape with.

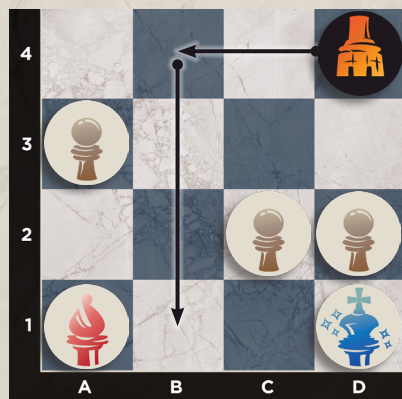
The fact that the black king would enter check warping to A1 is irrelevant. The threat causes check, even if the actual king-capturing move would be illegal because of a pin or entering check.

Masquerade

9

If you have a card with a bolded piece type on it, and you have no pieces of that type on the board, you can masquerade. Replace that word on the card with any piece type of your choice, and then execute the card. If there are two bolded piece types on a card, each is considered for masquerading separately.

After you use the masqueraded card, score it face-down for 25 points instead of its normal value.



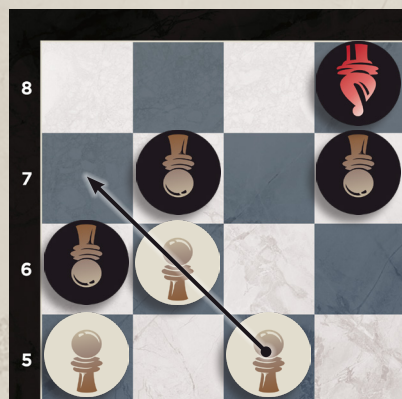
75

Move your **queen** twice without capturing.

NW

You (as black) have card [NW]. You previously lost your queen, so you're able to masquerade. You choose to replace queen with rook.

Your rook can now move twice, and even without capturing it delivers a devastating check!



100

Warp your **knight** to an empty square by **another**.

JX

You (as white) have card [JX]. You previously lost both your knights, so you're able to masquerade. You choose to replace knight with pawn. "another" in the effect now refers to pawns.

Despite black's blockade, you can now warp a pawn behind their lines! It's now one step away from promotion.

Because pieces in Chess Joker can move in somewhat unpredictable ways, we have a few clarifications of standard chess rules that are important to note.

Pawn Clarifications

If your pawn is on your first rank, it can move forward 2 spaces as a standard chess move.

When your pawn is on your eighth rank it promotes, but only at the conclusion of a standard move or a card's entire effect. The current player chooses how it promotes (to a Knight, Bishop, Rook, or Queen).

A pawn can capture an enemy pawn via En Passant if it is directly beside it **and** the enemy pawn moved forward 2 spaces on the previous turn. En passant doesn't apply if the pawn warped or moved "like a" piece of another type. Also, if you don't know what En Passant is, you can safely pretend it doesn't exist.

Castling



A king and rook may castle if neither of them has moved or warped this game, both are on valid starting squares, and all spaces between them are empty. Also, the king cannot be in check, and no space the king moves through can be threatened. The rook castling does not need to be one of your original two rooks.

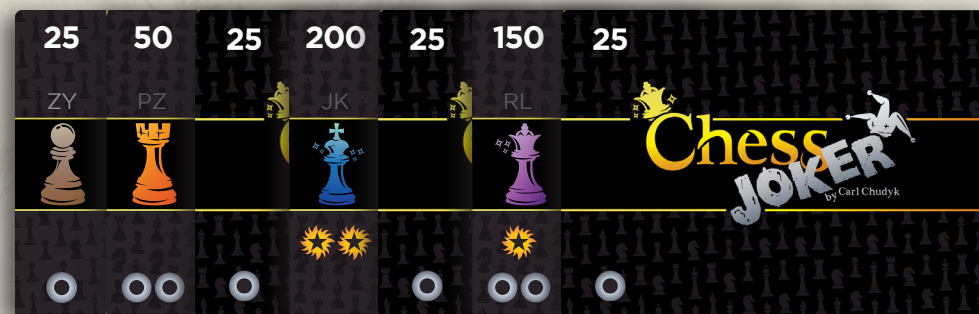
Extra Pieces

There is no limit to the number of pieces a player can have on the board of any given type, except that a player always has only 1 king. Bishop/knight and rook/queen pieces are double-sided to help in situations with extra pieces. If there are insufficient physical pieces, you can use an upside-down pawn's blank side, or any other proxy.



Your Score Pile is comprised of the Joke cards you use over the course of the game plus any face-down cards scored. You score a card face-down when you Masquerade, when you're placed in check (unless it would bring you to 800 points), and each turn your opponent starts with 3 or fewer pieces on the board. Face-down cards are each worth 25 points. If the cards in your score pile ever total 800 or more, you win immediately!

If you arrange your score pile splayed out, you can use the  and  icons to easily count your score. And, when cleaning up, be sure to pull out the darker face-down cards before reshuffling.



Appendix & FAQ

The latest version of this rulebook along with any errata is available at AsmadiGames.com/chess

There, you can also find the Chess Joker Appendix, containing entries with FAQ and clarifications for each card. You can search the Appendix by the two letter code on any given card.





Chess

JOKER

by Carl Chudyk



Credits

GAME DESIGN: Carl Chudyk

GAME DEVELOPMENT: Chris Cieslik

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Robert Simmons

LEAD PLAYTESTING: Joe Kim

©2025 Asmadi Games