

Chinese Chess

象棋



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Xiangqi 象棋

Xiangqi is a two-player board game from the same family of games as Chaturanga, Western Chess, Shogi, and Janggi. Xiangqi is known in the West as Chinese Chess and is one of the most widely played board games in the world.

Objective

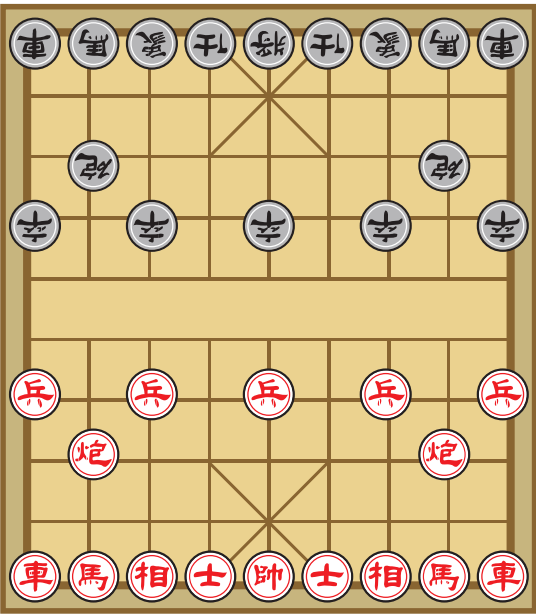
The goal of Xiangqi is to checkmate your opponent’s general — placing them in a position where they cannot escape capture.

Equipment

The board is composed of 9 vertical lines (files) and 10 horizontal lines (ranks) with the pieces being played on the intersections. On each side of the board against the back edge is a palace, which is 3 by 3 points (9 positions) with four diagonal lines that extend outward from the center forming an X-shape. Dividing the two opposing sides of the board is a river, located between the fifth and sixth ranks. The river is often marked with the Chinese characters 楚河 (Chǔ Hé), meaning ‘Chu River’, and 漢界 (Hàn Jiè), meaning ‘Han Border’, a reference to the Chu-Han War. Some boards have the starting points of soldiers marked with small crosses.

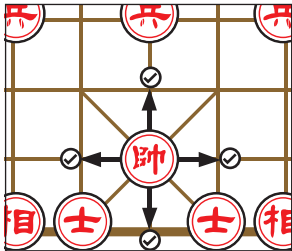
Arrangement

The starting positions of the pieces are arranged as shown below.

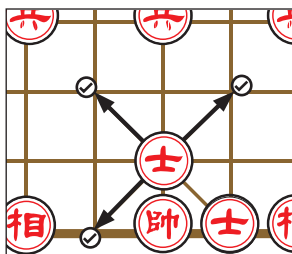


Pieces

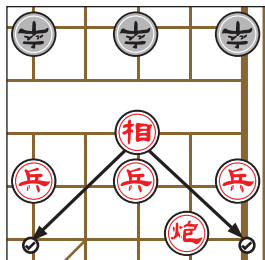
The playing pieces are indicated by Chinese characters. The same ranking pieces sometimes have different characters for each side and sometimes are written in either traditional or simplified Chinese characters. The pieces are identified below by English name, Chinese pronunciation, traditional Chinese character, simplified Chinese character if it is different, and then the character variation.



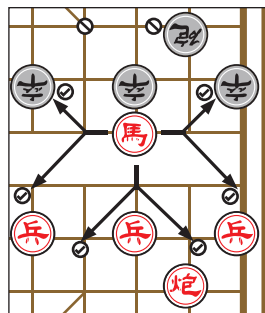
General “Shuài” 帥/帅 and “Jiàng” 將/将 – Generals may move one point either vertically or horizontally, but not diagonally, and are confined to the nine points within their palace. A general may not move into a file, which is occupied by the enemy general, unless there is at least one piece positioned between the generals in the file.



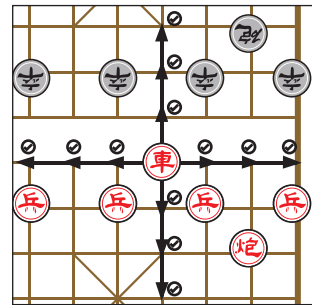
Guard / Advisor “Shì” 仕 and “Shì” 士 – These are the king’s counselors and guard the king within the palace. The guard moves one point diagonally and is confined to the palace.



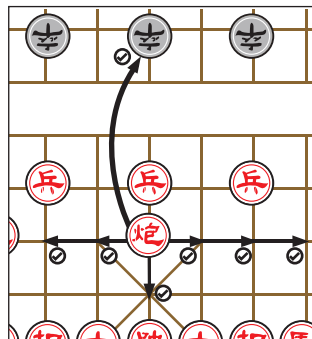
Elephant “Xiàng” 相 and “Xiàng” 象 – The elephants move exactly two points in any diagonal direction and may not jump over intervening pieces or cross the river.



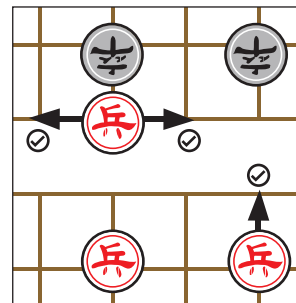
Horse “Mǎ” 馬/马 and “Mǎ” 馬/马 – The horse moves one point in a straight direction (horizontally or vertically), followed by one point diagonally outward. It cannot move in a direction where there is a piece blocking it along the path of movement.



Chariot “Jū” 俥/车 and “Jū” 車/车 – The chariot moves similarly to the rook in international chess. The chariot moves as many points as it wishes horizontally or vertically. It cannot jump over pieces in its path.



Cannons “Pào” 炮 and “Pào” 砲 – Cannons move exactly like the chariot. To capture, however, a cannon must jump over exactly one piece—friend or foe—along its line of movement.



Soldier “Bīng” 兵 and “Zú” 卒 – Soldiers move and capture by advancing one point forward along the file. Once a soldier has crossed the river it may also move and capture one point horizontally. A soldier may never move backward, thus retreating.

Gameplay

Players take turns moving one piece per turn. Pieces capture by using their normal moves and landing on a point occupied by an enemy piece. Generally, red makes the first move but two players can agree to play otherwise.

Victory is achieved when one player successfully checkmates the opponent’s general. Checkmate occurs when the other player’s general is left with no legal move to avoid capture on the next turn. When the player’s general is in danger of being captured on the next move, that general is in check, “Jiāng” 將/将, and the player threatening capture announces it.

If a player repeats a move that forces the opponent to repeat as well, they must break the repetition cycle on their next turn.

If a player repeats the same position while checking the opponent three times in a row, the game is declared a draw.



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