Introduction

Introducing the Game and Learning the Chessboard
Welcome! With the ChessKid.com curriculum, we have created an original, kid-friendly way of learning the game of chess. While acquiring knowledge of the rules of chess, understanding the fundamentals, and learning advanced strategies and tactics, coaches and beginning chess players alike will enjoy working through these lessons.

To create a system that would be both kid-and-classroom-friendly, we brainstormed, outlined, and designed a curriculum format to support one single goal:

**Develop a child's ability from no knowledge of the game to the level of an experienced scholastic chess player.**

We keep the language simple in this curriculum. While we believe children with a fourth- or fifth-grade reading level could work through this curriculum on their own, the most practical application of this curriculum is instructor-guided, taught in a classroom format, and used in conjunction with training tools and video lessons on ChessKid.com.

With this latest edition, we meet the needs of educators looking to provide their chess club/class with a 21st-century skill-building environment, one with flipped classroom capabilities that will help even the newest to chess. Our team worked closely with Common Core experts and experienced classroom teachers to link our content directly to the new standards for each grade on a national level. Those familiar with our first edition will take note of the revamped Teacher’s Guides and Essential Questions, created to furnish lesson plans that align correctly with the Common Core State Standards implemented in schools for Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Our Pacing Guide provides two options—one for full, every day classroom integration, and another for after school/enrichment program formats.

We use Bloom’s Taxonomy leveled questioning, provide practical advice, and suggest ways to keep the experience fun throughout the Higher Order Thinking learning process. We provide practical tips to help both the non-experienced chess teacher and the seasoned chess coach. Every lesson, diagram, practice page, and activity work together to cover all the key concepts a beginner chess player needs.

We strongly recommend that coaches (whether teaching groups or individuals) review each lesson in its entirety first before presenting it to their student(s).

Good luck, and have fun!

Sincerely,
International Master Daniel Rensch
(www.ChessKid.com username: PoppaBear)
Vice President of Content and Professional Relations, Chess.com LLC.
Introduction

Part 1: A Brief History Of The Game, Basic Terminology, and Scorekeeping (Algebraic Notation)

Key Concepts

- A brief history of chess.
- The basics of using a chess board.
- Chess terminology: speaking the language of chess.
- Scorekeeping/notation (keeping track of a chess game).

Chess is one of the oldest games in the world, and may be the oldest board game. Its origins stem back to India, over 1500 years ago, with the unclear but widely accepted view that the original versions of chess were invented around 600 A.D. Though it's believed to have started in East Asia, India, and Persia, the modern version of the game—meaning the rules we use today—did not begin taking shape until chess moved west, into France and areas of Southern Europe, around the 15th Century.

Tournament-style chess, as we would recognize it today, has been played since the mid-1800s. The first ever World Championship Match was held in 1886. Many exciting games have been played, and many great champions from all parts of our world have enjoyed and grown to love the game of chess. We hope you will too!
The Chessboard: 64 squares, divided by files, ranks and diagonals.

The game of chess is played on a perfectly square, 8x8 board. There are 64 squares on a chessboard, alternating light and dark (White and Black).

When you face a chessboard, the bottom-right corner should always be a White/light square, either from White or Black’s perspective. This is very important when setting up the pieces. To help kids remember this, we use a fun phrase: “Before we fight, you must have White/light on the right!” Of course, we are only fighting on the chessboard!

The chessboard is divided and described in three different ways. We use the term file to describe the letters (a-h) and the squares that go up from them. Every square on the e-file has been highlighted with stars to show this. We use the term rank to describe every square in a straight line from where the numbers (1-8) begin. Every square along the fourth rank has been highlighted to show this. We use the term diagonal to describe every square moving corner-to-corner (h1-a8 is a diagonal); every square along the h1-a8 diagonal has a star.

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**
Using a chess board, how would you show someone the other longest diagonal on the board: a1-h8?
Scorekeeping: the basics of keeping track of a game with algebraic notation.

In order to work through this curriculum or play in a chess tournament, you will need to understand how to read a chessboard. Though there have been many different methods used to keep track of a game throughout history, the best, most efficient method we use in chess today is called Algebraic Notation.

Each chess square has a unique address, a name that is different from that of every other square. If you look down from the square, you'll see a letter, and if you look to the left of a square, you'll see a number. Each square's special address is that letter and number combined. When using algebraic chess terms, we always say the letter first. There are stars on e4 and h6.

**Essential Question, Level 1: Knowledge**
Can you write the algebraic notation for one of the squares that is not starred? Are there any other subjects in schools that teach you to use a graph like this chessboard?
Scorekeeping: how to use algebraic notation.

We use Algebraic Notation in real games to keep a record of each move we make. We do this so that we can explain our games and positions to other players and coaches afterward, and so that there is proof, in the event of an argument, that the rules were followed in that chess game.

Here are some examples of how algebraic notation is used:

- Ke2 (king moves from e1 to e2);
- Nc3 (Knight moves from b1 to c3, and we use “N” for Knight);
- g5 (we don’t use the letter “P” when a Pawn moves forward, but instead only write the square it moves to); etc.

Use the uppercase first letter of the piece that is moving for all pieces besides the Pawn, and use “N” for Knight. When capturing a piece, write an “x” between the uppercase letter and the square. Example, if there were a piece on c3, moving the Knight to that square would be written as Nxc3.

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**

What are the letter abbreviations for each piece? Using algebraic notation, write 10 moves for pieces being moved to random squares of your choosing on the board.
More chess terms: Kingside, Queenside, White's side, and Black's side.

You will learn much more about how to read and use a chessboard as you work through our curriculum, but you now know the basics of chess terminology—the words we use while playing or describing a chess game.

The final fundamental chess terms you need to know in order to study and learn from our curriculum are as follows:

- **Kingside**—this term describes every square and piece that is on the board from the e-file (the king's file) over to the h-file
- **Queenside**—this references the entire board to the left of the d-file all the way to the a-file
- **White's side**—the first to the fourth rank
- **Black's side**—the fifth to the eighth rank

Congratulations! You now speak chess!

**Essential Question, Level 1: Knowledge**

Why do you suppose the squares from the e-file to the h-file are referred to as the kingside? And why are the squares from the d-file to the a-file considered the Queenside?
Part 2: Setting Up the Board and Learning the Value Of the Chessmen

Key Concepts

- Setting up a chess board from start to finish.
- Piece values (the point value of each piece).

How to set up a chessboard, from start to finish.

Each King is placed on its starting position: the White King starts on e1, and the Black King starts on e8. Note the kings start on the opposite color square of their army: the White King on a Black square and the Black King on a White square.

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**
What is the starting color for each king?

Each Queen is placed on its starting position: The White Queen starts on d1, and the Black Queen starts on d8. Note the Queens start the game on their color: the Black Queen on a Black square; the White Queen on a White square.

A fun way to remember to place the Queen on her own color is to say, “In the old days, all Queens had to make sure that their dress matched their shoes, especially when going to the ball!”

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**
What is the starting color for each Queen?
Each **Rook** is placed on its starting position in one of the four corners of the board: White Rooks are placed on a1 and h1, and Black Rooks placed on a8 and h8.

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**
Can you write the algebraic notation for each Rook in this diagram?

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Each **Knight** is placed on its starting position: White Knights are placed on b1 and g1, and Black Knights are placed on b8 and g8. The Knights stand next to the Rooks.

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**
Can you write the algebraic notation of each of the Knights?

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Each **Bishop** is placed on its starting position: White Bishops are placed on c1 and f1, and the Black Bishops are placed on c8 and f8.

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**
Can you write the algebraic notation of each Bishop?
Each player starts with eight **Pawns**. White’s Pawns are placed along the second rank from a2-h2, and Black’s Pawns are placed along the seventh rank from a7-h7.

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**
Can you state which rank the White Pawns begin on and which rank the Black Pawns begin on, using algebraic notation?

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**The Chessboard is complete: the basic rules and introduction to the chessmen.**

Chess is a board game played between two players. Each player takes a turn to move, with White always moving first. The turns alternate: a player must move when it is his or her turn, every move after White makes the first move. The diagram you see is the starting position to every game of chess. White’s pieces are always set up along the first and second ranks, while Black’s pieces occupy the seventh and eighth ranks.

There are 32 chessmen: 16 chessmen for White and 16 chessmen for Black. A chessman is either a piece or a Pawn. Each player starts out with one king, one Queen, two Rooks, two Knights, two Bishops, and eight Pawns.

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**
Could you recall the setup of the board if it was wiped clean? Show your teacher that you can do this!
Piece values

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Use your knowledge of the value of the chessmen to make good choices during a game.

Over the years, experience has taught us that some pieces are more powerful than others. We have tried to capture that idea by assigning point values to the different chess pieces. These points are used to make decisions. “Should I give up my Queen for that Pawn?” is an example. Once you know and understand the point values, you will know the answer to that question!

Students also first need to use this knowledge in Lesson 4.

Though a game can still be won by someone who is losing in total points, it is not likely. This will be reiterated in Lesson 4. You win a chess game through checkmate, not points, but points are an important guideline for making decisions. They help you choose and estimate who has more or less material (more powerful pieces) in any given position.
LESSON 7

The “Quick” and Other Basic Checkmates
Overview

Lesson 7 of our curriculum introduces the quickest and some of the most common checkmates that occur in chess. It highlights the fastest two-, three-, and four-move checkmates possible, while emphasizing the limitations that trying to checkmate your opponent this quickly can have on your piece development and strategy for the rest of the game, should your plans at a quick mate prove unsuccessful. Lesson 7 also highlights the most basic checkmating patterns and how they can be used in different positions with different pieces.

Part 1 emphasizes that these quick checkmating plans are not perfect, because trying for a quick checkmate can seriously hinder the skills learned in Lessons 5, 6, and those to come in Lesson 8. The important opening strategies, such as piece development and castling, should be valued ahead of a quick, easy win against better players. Part 2 delves into some of the fundamental checkmating patterns that every developing student must master. These checkmating patterns will prove invaluable to students as they continue to learn how to use their pieces together in harmony to attack their opponent's King and win games.

The Practice Pages and Classroom Activities are essential to mastering checkmating sequences and patterns, because practice builds the foundation and necessary memorization of these concepts. Students' ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding is the foundation for not only all of the Common Core State Standards (K-5) implementation, but specifically targets CCSS: Math. Content. G.A.1 (K-5), G.A.2 (K-3) (see Appendix) for Geometry and pattern recognition. Students' basic understanding of the game is developing into deeper patterns and concepts, including knowledge of how to complete an entire game effectively. These checkmates vary in terms of their length and difficulty, and provide an excellent foundation to future crucial checkmating patterns that will aid in each student's pattern-recognition growth.
Learning the Quick Mates (Part 1) can be one of the most fun and crucial lessons for a beginning chess player. These fast wins provide, for many beginners, the first examples of a complete chess game. However impractical that game may be, a coach should use this opportunity to help students understand that winning material and capturing all of their opponent’s pieces is not always necessary to achieve checkmate.

The goal of chess is not the same goal as checkers! Remind students the importance of defending their weakest squares (f7 or f2). This principle is essential for every chess player’s growth.

The three basic checkmate patterns we chose for Part 2 were selected because of their practical value. Back Rank combinations, Smothered Checkmates, and the other basic Support mating patterns occur with the most frequency in tournament play. However, we recommend placing just as much emphasis on memorizing the other checkmate patterns, included in the “Famous Checkmates” Practice Pages.

Practical Notes and Advice—Lesson 7

- Use the “Guarding f2 and f7” Practice Page to remind students that while knowing the Quick Mates is important, it is not always wise to try for a checkmate so early in the game. Doing so is an inefficient use of time, and will likely lead to the risk of the Queen being attacked by the minor pieces.

- Though not every position included in the “Famous Checkmates” Practice Pages will occur on a regular basis during practical play, all of them display an important checkmate pattern that should be memorized. To help these ideas become concrete in every student’s mind, we recommend:

  1. When instructing large groups, set up the positions in the “Famous Checkmates” Practice Pages on a demo board for group discussion before asking the students to solve them on their own.
  2. Have student solve tactics (where the Famous Checkmate patterns are likely to occur often) using ChessKid.com’s Puzzles.
  3. Associate each checkmate pattern’s original name with the diagram, as this will further cement the idea via name recognition. Further, by making the positions personal, a coach will increase each child’s mental imprint of the checkmate pattern.
Lesson 7

Part 1: Quick Mates in Four Moves or Less

Key Concepts

- The Fool’s Mate (a.k.a. the “Two-Move Mate”).
- The Fidgety King and the Knight’s Dream (a.k.a. the “Three-Move Mates”).
- The Scholar’s Mate and the other Four-Move Checkmate.
- The Weakest Squares on a chessboard: f7 and f2!

The Fastest way to lose a chess game: the Fool’s Mate.

For any of the quick mates in this lesson to work, several fundamental principles of the Opening (Lessons 6 and 8) must be broken. You can see this clearly with the first and quickest checkmate on our list: The Fool’s Mate. Only White can lose so quickly, and only by playing horrific starting moves!

Shown in this diagram, White started by moving either the f-Pawn (1.f3 or 1.f4) or g-Pawn (1.g4). Black then opened the Queen’s diagonal (d8-h4) with either 1...e6 or 1...e5. White then followed with a second blunder (assuming 1.f3? was played, White then follows with 2.g4??) and Black delivers checkmate on h4.

Essential Question, Level IV: Analysis
Knowing what you know about the best ways to start a chess game, how can you justify how White should have avoided this checkmate in two moves?
The first checkmate in three moves: the Fidgety King.

As we learned from the Fool’s Mate, your opponent must cooperate in order for checkmate to be achieved this early in a game (any checkmate within four moves needs help). Because your opponent needs to assist you in some way, these quick mates might also be known as “help mates.”

The “Fidgety King,” a checkmate in three moves, is no exception. Your opponent’s King must be jumpy, or at least have a “crazy itch,” in order to leave the e8-square voluntarily, walking directly into checkmate on e7. The moves used to reach the position are beneath the diagram.

Essential Question, Level IV: Analysis
What conclusions can you draw about Black’s play from this position and his early defeat?

The second checkmate in three moves: the Knight’s Dream.

The second checkmate in three moves is slightly more logical in terms of development and Opening principles, though not by much. White does at least start with a great move, 1.e4; however, when White meets 1…Nc6 with the terrible 2.Ne2?! , he blocks his own King, Queen, and Bishop. With this kind of neglectful development, disaster is bound to strike!

Black can then follow up with 2…Nb4 (2…Ne5 can also reach the d3-square in three moves, though it doesn’t “tempt” White into the horrific blunder on move three like 2…Nb4 does), and when White can’t help but attack the b4-Knight with the terrible move 3.c3??, Black delivers mate with 3…Nd3#.

Essential Questions, Level IV: Analysis
Using the knowledge you’ve gained about the Opening stage, can you identify White’s first mistake in this game?
The Scholar's Mate, step 1: White develops the Queen early for tricks.

The weakest squares in chess are f7 and f2, as these squares are defended by the Kings alone to start every chess game (which should serve as another good reminder of the importance of castling, as we learned in Lesson 5). The plan 1.e4 e5 2.Qh5 targets the f7-square, but also attacks the e5-Pawn.

Unlike any of the previous three “quick mates,” the Scholar’s Mate cannot totally be classified as a “help mate.” If Black is to develop 2...Nf6, for example, White would then play 3.Qxe5+, checking and winning a Pawn.

Black's best move, 2...Nc6, defends the e5-Pawn, but leaves the door open for the trap key to the Scholar’s Mate idea. Once White develops the f1-Bishop to the c4-square, Black must not focus solely on the development of his King side or on attacking White’s Queen. Black must remember the weakness on f7.

Essential Questions, Level V: Synthesis
Can you think of an original way to explain to a beginning chess player, in two paragraphs or less, why Black needs to defend the e5-Pawn with 2...Nc6 before attacking the White Queen with 2...Nf6?
The Scholar's Mate, step 2: Black falls into White's trap. Checkmate on f7!

After the natural, yet terrible blunder, 3...Nf6??, White uses the h5-e8 diagonal to “slip around” the f6-Knight and capture the f7-Pawn, delivering checkmate and leaving the Black King stunned as to why his army did not come to his defense! Notice White’s Queen is defended by the Bishop on c4.

Black did indeed have multiple ways to defend this tricky threat of checkmate. 3...Qe7, 3...Qf6, 3...Nh6, and the best move, 3...g6. 3...g6 chases the White Queen from h5, and after 4..Nf6 and 5...Bg7, Black has completed development and is ready to castle Kingside, bringing safety to the King and completing Kingside development.

**Essential Question, Level V: Synthesis**
Can you modify the position in the diagram and explain which two pieces of Black’s would be needed for a similar attack against White’s f2-square?
The “Helpers” Four-Move checkmate, step 1: develop and hope for help.

There is another common way beginners will try for a “quick mate,” similar to the Scholar’s Mate we just learned. The Bishop’s Opening—defined as 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4—is not a bad approach for White, as it does develop a piece and attack the weakest square. However, should it be met by 2...Nf6, attacking the e4-Pawn and closing off access to his weak f7-square.

After 2...Nf6, White would likely defend the e4-Pawn with either 3.d3 or 3.Nc3. Both players would then focus on completing their development as they prepare to castle their Kings and battle in the Middlegame. However, if Black is in a “helpful” mood, he might choose a less aggressive path, and allow White to increase the pressure on f7.

**Essential Question, Level VI: Evaluation**

Using what you’ve learned about the Opening stage, how would you evaluate this position if you faced it in one of your games, and what would be the goals for both players at this current stage?
The “Helper’s” Four-Move checkmate, step 2: help is on the way.

To learn our second version of the Four-Move checkmate, let’s assume that Black instead chooses a second move such as 2...Nc6. White could then continue with 3.Qf3 (3.Qh5 is similar to Scholar’s Mate). Both moves threaten to capture f7, and when another “neglectful” developing move such as 3...Bc5?? is made, White can end the game with 4.Qxf7#.

This second four-move checkmate is referred to as the “helper’s” mate because Black’s moves were dubious and helped White’s plan to attack f7. Black ignored defense of the weakest square. If Black had chosen more logical moves (either 2...Nf6, or a move to defend f7, on move 3) there would have been no checkmate in four moves.

Essential Question, Level V: Synthesis
How would you reconstruct the concept of the “Helper’s Mate” for Black to checkmate White on f2 early in the game?
Part 2: Other Basic Checkmate Ideas and Patterns

Key Concepts

- The Back Rank checkmate.
- The Smothered checkmate.
- Simple “Support Mates” and basic checkmate strategy.

Back Rank checkmate, example 1: the “Rook roller” pattern.

Now that we have learned the quick mates and the most basic checkmates that can occur in the Opening stage of a game (Part 1), here we take a look at several fundamental checkmate ideas and patterns that every beginning chess player should know, though they occur far from the beginning stage.

The “Back Rank Mate” is simply defined as a checkmate where the enemy King is trapped against his own back rank. Here we see an example familiar to us, as we learned this pattern in Part 2 of Lesson 4.

Essential Question, Level IV: Analysis

Can you assess the value or importance of knowing this mate, especially if one is a beginner in chess?
Back Rank checkmate, example 2: the King is trapped by his own army.

Perhaps the most common version of a Back Rank Mate is when the enemy King finds himself trapped along the back row (on either the first or eighth rank) by his own Pawns. Notice that Black's Pawns “replace” all the squares the White Rook on b7 guarded in example 1.

To avoid this catastrophe, in some cases a player may move one of the Pawns in front of the King forward ahead of time. Imagine the Black h-Pawn on h6 rather than h7, thus providing the h7 square as an escape route for the otherwise trapped King. This is a common defensive idea, preventing a Back Rank Mate tactic from taking place, and should be remembered by all beginners.

**Essential Question, Level V: Synthesis**
Can you construct a diagram or position using a chess board that would change this position so that there is no Back Rank Mate?

The Smothered Checkmate: the King created his own prison.

Here we have a “Smothered Checkmate.” This checkmate is called smothered because the King is squeezed in by its own pieces and cannot breathe.

There are many beautiful combinations that climax in a smothered checkmate position, such as you see here. The notorious “Venus Fly Trap” named after the deadly flower, can be seen in action in both ChessKid.com videos and articles.

Only a Knight can deliver a Smothered Mate, as by definition, the King must be directly surrounded by his own pieces, and only the Knight can deliver a check without directly facing the King on an open diagonal or file.
Essential Question, Level V: Synthesis
Can you construct your own smothered mate for Black, starting with an empty board? For extra credit, can you use the Web (and ChessKid.com) to find an article or video on the Venus Fly Trap or a different Smothered Mate?

A Support Checkmate, example 1.

One final basic mating pattern all beginning chess players should know is a Support Mate. Unlike the Back Rank or Smothered Mate, a Support Mate requires the help of another piece. This teammate provides protection for the Queen as she delivers the final blow. You already learned and mastered one example of a Support Mate pattern when you learned the King and Queen Mate in Lesson 3.

Here we see a common example for the Support Mate. The Black Queen on g2, checkmating the White King on g1, is protected by the Pawn on f3. This pattern can occur on any edge of the board: The first and eighth ranks, or the a- and h-files. Imagine replacing that Pawn on f3 with a Black King, and you have a position similar to the mating technique you learned in Lesson 3, Part 1.

Essential Question, Level VI: Evaluation
Other than the Pawn and the King, is there another piece that could be placed on f3 that would protect the Queen? Can you image placing other pieces on the board to protect the Queen on g2?
A Support Checkmate, example 2.

A Support Mate occurs when the Queen gives checkmate and is protected by either a Pawn or a piece. However, *the protecting piece is not required to be right next to the Queen*. Some pieces can protect from far away! In many cases, the Queen is guarded by a Knight, Bishop, or Rook.

With White’s last move being 1.Qb7 checkmate, we see the trapped Black King with no safe squares. Black cannot capture the enemy First Lady because of the h1-Bishop’s long-range protection. Like the “King and Queen versus King” checkmate in Lesson 3, Part 1, the lone Queen can chase and corner an enemy King, but she needs help to finish the job.

**Essential Question, Level VI: Evaluation**
Based on what you’ve learned, how would you explain a Support Mate to someone new to chess?
Lesson 7 Summary and Linking Content to Standards

In this lesson, students learned several examples of quick checkmates, and some of the most basic, critical checkmating patterns that can be used with a variety of different pieces in different positions. This lesson aligns with Research to Build and Present Knowledge Comprehension and Collaboration of the K-5 Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts: Speaking and Listening, but also applies Geometry, Counting concepts, Number names and count sequence (1st-2nd), and Addition and subtraction within numbers less than 20 (for first and second grades), by emphasizing patterns and teaching students how to finish a chess game with varying checkmates. These advanced chess concepts provide students with skills necessary to advancing in the curriculum and in their tournament games.

Students first learned examples of the quickest checkmates that are possible in a chess game, and then were challenged to understand the limitations of attempting to checkmate your opponent in these fast strategies. Next, students learned several of the most critical checkmating patterns, including the Back Rank checkmate, Smothered Mate, and a Support Checkmate. Learning these checkmate patterns will allow future mastery of more complex tactical and checkmate patterns (starting in Lesson 9), and will also provide key instruction on piece coordination and successful endgames.

Additionally, students are now able to use pieces cohesively and to think ahead, a critical skill required in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). CCSS Math Content is addressed by requiring the student to express grade/course level-appropriate mathematical reasoning by constructing arguments that are valid, critiquing the reasoning of others in a collaborative setting, and/or attending to precision when making mathematical statements. Another PARCC expectation is the CCSS ELA.-Literacy.SL. (Speaking and Listening) component, where students apply the skills of expressing ideas, collaborating with peers cooperatively, effectively elaborating on their thoughts and understanding, and building on one another’s ideas to increase understanding of a topic.
Vertical Alignment: Common Core State Standards K-5

**Speaking and Listening:** ELA-Literacy. SL K-5 Comprehension and Collaboration

**Writing:** ELA-Literacy-Writing K-5: Write and Express Ideas

**Mathematics:** G.A.1 and 2 K-5: Geometry

**Mathematics:** Know Number Names and Count Sequence

**Reading:** Reading Informational Text: RI: K-5

**Phonics and Recognition:** ELA-Literacy.RF.1.3 and 2.3 (1-2)

**Literacy: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use:** ELA-Literacy.L.2.4 and 2.6 (2-5)

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# Practice Pages

## Practice 1: Famous checkmates

The following diagrams are checkmate in either one or two moves. These famous patterns should be memorized by all beginning chess players.

The “Swallow’s Tail” Mate:

- **White to play**, checkmate in one move

The “Arabian” Mate:

- **White to play**, checkmate in one move

Pillsbury’s Mate:

- **White to play**, checkmate in two moves

Blackburne’s Mate:

- **White to play**, checkmate in two moves
Practice 1: Famous checkmates

The following diagrams are checkmate in either one or two moves. These “famous” patterns should be memorized by all beginning chess players. 
(Further descriptions with answer key.)

Boden's (or “Criss-Cross”) Mate:  
**White to play**, checkmate in two moves

Anastasia's Mate:  
**White to play**, checkmate in two moves

Greco's Mate:  
**White to play**, checkmate in two moves

Legal's Mate:  
**White to play**, checkmate in two moves
Practice 2: Guarding f2 and f7

In the following diagrams, there is a threat of either checkmate or the win of material on the f2 or f7 square. Find the best way to guard the weakest squares against threats.

Circle your favorite piece that can protect,
and for bonus points, write your move below each diagram.
Answer Key

Practice Page 1: Famous checkmates

Diagram #1 1.Qe6#
Diagram #2 1.Rg8!! Kxg8 2.Rg1#
Diagram #3 1.Rh7#
Diagram #4 1.Qxh5 gxh5 (1...f8-R anywhere, Qh8# and 1...f6 or 1...f5 2.Qh7#) 2.Bh7#

Practice Page 2: Famous checkmates

Diagram #1 1.Qxc6+! bxc6 2.Ba6#
Diagram #2 1.Qg6! hxg5 (any other move 2.Qh7#) 2.Qh5#
Diagram #3 1.Qxh7+! Kxh7 2.Rh1#
Diagram #4 1.Bxf7+! Ke7 2.Nd5#

Practice Page 3: Guarding f2 and f7

Diagram #1 1.Qe2, 1.Qf3, 1.d4 and 1.Nh3 are correct.
1.Qe2 is best followed by developing the g1-Knight to f3.
Diagram #2 1...Qe7, 1...d5 and 1...Nd5 are correct.
1...Qe7 is best, as both of the other options lose material for Black.
Diagram #3 1.Qe2, 1.Qf3, 1.0-0, 1.Ng4 and 1.Nd3 are correct.
1.Nd3 is best as it is the only move that guards f2 and protects the e5-Knight.
Diagram #4 1...Nh6, 1...Qe7 and 1...Qf6 are correct. 1...Nh6 is best.
Classroom Activities

Activity 1: the Scholar’s Mate Tango

Activity goal: Practicing the main variations of the four-move checkmate, recognition of the weakest squares f2 and f7, learning key defensive strategies to avoid "quick" checkmates, and recognition of the flaws of a failed four-move attempt: underdeveloped pieces, Queen getting chased around the board, and other weakening moves (Part 1).

Comprehension and collaboration: Speaking and Listening: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL. 1.A, 1.B (K-5), 1.C., 1.D., (2-5) ; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2,3 (K-5), CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6 (K) (See Appendix)

Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.(K-1)


Instructions
- Set up the chessboard and pieces in the starting positions and pair the students off.
- First, the student with the White pieces will attempt a Scholar’s Mate checkmate against the f7-square. The student with the Black pieces will make no moves. The first player will demonstrate their basic knowledge of the four-move pattern and how to attack an opponent’s weakest square.
- Reset the board. Now, White will attempt the Scholar’s Mate checkmate again, but now his opponent will also make moves with the Black pieces. Black should attempt to defend against the checkmate, as he or she knows it is coming!
- If Black successfully defends against the Scholar’s Mate threat, reward her or him with a small prize (small toy, treat, or other classroom reinforcement such as free time).
- Now, have the partners switch. The student who played White will now play Black, and repeat the same exercise. If this student successfully defends against the Scholar’s Mate as Black, reward him or her with a reinforcement.

Students can attempt this exercise multiple times, each time trying to defend against the Scholar’s Mate in a different way.
Activity 2: Draw some support

Activity goal: Understanding the power of the Queen in checkmating patterns; reinforcing ideas of the “support” checkmate and how each piece contributes in a different way; to reward and provide encouragement for the basic task of setting up different checkmating patterns. (Part 2)


Counting: CCSS.Math.Content. CC.A.1 and 2 (K-1)

Addition and subtraction within 20: CCSS.Math.Content.1.OA.A.2,1.OA.C5; 2.OA.B.2 (1-2) (See Appendix)

Instructions
- Setup empty boards and hand each student only one piece: a Queen.
- Have each student draw one additional piece (Pawn, Bishop, Knight, and Rook) out of a “mystery bag” of pieces.
- Each student must use their Queen and the piece that they drew from the mystery bag to create a “support” checkmate against a randomly placed Black King on an edge of the board.
- Make sure the student can create at least one “support” checkmate with that piece before letting her or him reach into the mystery bag for a different piece.
- Once the mate is created, have the student draw a different piece out of the mystery bag, and create different “support” checkmate with his or her Queen and the new piece.
- Students can try to create up to five different “support” checkmates with the different pieces.

Bonus activity:
Award a grand prize to the student who sets up the most “support” checkmates in a certain amount of time (racing against the clock, perhaps. If there are only 5 or 10 minutes left in the class, this will make it fun for the students). All students who set up X amount of “support” checkmates can also earn a prize; Teacher/Coach can vary prizes and giveaways based on class size, retention, and age.
LESSON 20

Playing Tournament-Level Chess
Overview

Lesson 20 focuses on the ultimate goal all chess players have: successful tournament play. By now, students have mastered many of the fundamentals of chess, and they are ready to put those skills to the test in a competitive environment. This lesson highlights some of the key critical thinking tools students can use as weapons in developing their own plans and limiting the plans their opponent may have throughout the course of a game.

Part 1 emphasizes that chess is less about memorization and more about understanding. Using the skills a player has developed on strategic and tactical levels should help guide them through positions they may not otherwise be sure how to handle. There are examples of how to organize your thoughts and formulate a plan at any stage of the game—the Opening, the Middlegame, and the Endgame. Part 2 highlights the concept of prophylactic thinking, when a student must play to thwart a serious threat an opponent may have in the immediate or near future. Students are shown several examples of famous players using prophylactic thinking in their own games. Part 3 shifts the focus to three ways a chess game can end in a draw, all of which are useful to tournament players: perpetual check, three-fold repetition, and the 50-move draw rule. Knowing these ways to claim a draw can help a student when a position looks dire, and can turn what might otherwise be a loss into a split point.

The Classroom Activities help students feel confident to enter a competitive tournament setting. While not all students will play tournament chess, the skills learned in this lesson will prepare any student before entering any competitive event. The advanced critical thinking skills, along with the prophylactic training, align with Common Core State Standards (K-5) expectations of Geometry: angles, lines, shapes and coordinates, and ELA-Literacy: Speaking and Listening.
Teacher’s Guide

The key points of Lesson 20 are clearly practical, and in many ways, the beginning of chess psychology. Players can learn the X’s and O’s of basic strategy and tactics from self-taught methods (books, curricula such as this one, etc.), but without guidance or some form of psychological advice, they never truly develop the ability to apply their knowledge in games.

Our main goal in this lesson is to provide something that many books about chess do not: a user’s guide to critical thinking skills in chess. Many of the concepts recommended in regards to a player’s thought process could have been expanded upon in much greater detail. However, in keeping it relatively simple, we hope that beginning chess players will have a chance at immediately using the basics of critical thinking described in this lesson in their games.

Prophylactic thinking is much easier said than done. We did not provide Practice Pages on this subject, as we intend for a Teacher/Coach to use the positions given in Part 2 in an open classroom question-and-answer format, discussing prophylactic thinking strategies in a practical setting. The basics of “why did my opponent go there” were already discussed in Lesson 6, so going any deeper into prophylactic exercises would prove too abstract for children to follow at this level.

Practical Notes and Advice—Lesson 20

- When teaching the practical advice offered in Lesson 20, try to refer back to an earlier lesson that touched on each subject in more detail. Example: “In Lesson 6, we learned Openings, right, everyone? So this is what our thought process might be during the Opening while we try to follow the basic rules of development.” In this way, the abstract concepts of thinking are applied concretely to what students have already learned.

- Review the rules of Part 3 and make sure you fully understand the technicalities of each draw claim a player might make during a game before explaining them to your students. Otherwise, an inaccurate first impression of the rule might be a lasting one for certain students.
Lesson 20

Part 1: Finding High-Level Plans and Critical Thinking in Chess

Key Concepts

- How to “put it all together” in chess.
- Critical thinking skills and advanced planning.

Everything you have learned in this curriculum, from the basics of the game, how the pieces move, the fundamental principles of development and Opening strategy, to tactics, basic and advanced Pawn play, and Endgame technique, has prepared you for this final lesson. You are almost an experienced scholastic chess player ready to take on the world of tournament chess, and succeed!

But how does it all come together? Learning to apply what you know is often much more important than knowing everything (if that were even possible). Possessing the ability or thinking tools to figure out something you don’t know or a position you have never seen is far more important than your ability to memorize what you are taught.

Let’s talk about planning and critical thinking skills. How can you transition from just knowing things to actually applying what you’ve learned in your own chess games? It isn’t always easy, but let’s try to simplify a few important concepts.
Critical thinking, organizing your thoughts, and finding a plan: the Opening.

You know there are many things, perhaps too many, to think about even before your first move. Below is our list of steps to success for putting together what you know about the Opening stage of a chess game:

Don’t just develop pieces—develop plans! Here’s how:
1) Start out by always attacking the center.
2) As the Pawn structure changes, different paths (diagonals, squares and files) will become available to your pieces. Be willing to change, relocate, and adjust when needed.
3) As the structure becomes clear, develop a plan first, and then develop your pieces accordingly. Don’t ever make moves thinking, “I’ll figure out my plan after I get castled.”
4) Think about your plan from the beginning.

Essential Question, Level V: Synthesis
What plans can be chosen, and what steps can be taken, to minimize your chances for losing right out of the Opening?
Critical thinking, organizing your thoughts, and finding a plan: the Middlegame.

The Middlegame is the ultimate battlefield, where you and your opponent’s armies collide, often in heaps of forks, pins, skewers, and other tactics. Knowing how to find and target positional weaknesses is essential.

Play No Hope chess. Always play what’s best for you, and expect the best move from your opponent. “Hope chess” is when you are playing for tactics or tricks based on your opponent missing your threat or not playing the best move.

Remember the advice you’ve been given throughout this curriculum.

- Attack in the direction of your Pawns, or in the center, if it is open.
- Look for big three opportunities:
  - Can you check?
  - Can you capture?
  - Can you attack the Queen?
- Find and target positional weaknesses first and foremost, as they are the enduring features in the game.
- Your opponent might find the best moves, but if you are attacking something that is positional and can’t be undone, his or her best moves may not be able to stop you!

Essential Question, Level V: Synthesis
Can you elaborate further on the critical thinking concepts required and applied when developing a plan that your opponent cannot stop?
Critical thinking, organizing your thoughts, and finding a plan: the Endgame.

If an Endgame is reached where one side has a significant material advantage, we will leave those games up to technique, because those positions should be winnable by keeping it simple (Lesson 16). Here we are going to talk more about the critical thinking process during a roughly equal Endgame:

- Fewer pieces means less room for mistakes, so never take an Endgame lightly.
- Unfortunately, many players play Endgames as if the opposite is true: when there are fewer pieces, they move quickly and spend little effort. Don’t do that!
- The correct approach to an Endgame is to think of it as allowing less room for error, and make every decision like it could be your last.
- Take a moment to see what positional weaknesses have carried over from the Middlegame. Target the opponent’s weaknesses and defend your own.
- Do you have any passed Pawns? If yes, develop a plan of advancement. Do you have any pretending passed Pawns? If yes, develop a plan to trade.
- Prevent your opponent from doing the same.

Essential Question, Level V: Synthesis
Can you invent some questions you could ask yourself in a crucial Endgame position that would help you make the fewest errors possible?
Part 2: Prophylactic Thinking in Chess

Key Concepts
- What is prophylactic thinking?
- Advanced critical thinking: stopping your opponent's threats.

The bad news? Every checkmate attack and tactic you try to come up with for yourself, every plan based on targeting a positional weakness, and every single thing we covered in Part 1 that should be your thought process is also going to factor into your opponent's plan. Wait a second: everything we learned will be something we also must consider our opponent might try to do? That's right! So what do we do?

Welcome to chess, the most difficult game in the world! That's what it's all about: Learning as much as you can—which you are doing by reading this curriculum—and realizing that stopping your opponent from doing the same, while carrying out your own plans, is what makes chess so hard.

As in many of the last few lessons, we're going to give the short and simple version of very deep and advanced chess concepts, so don't get frustrated if it is a lot to take in. Instead, focus again on the fact that incorporating these general concepts and critical thinking skills into your games is better done sooner rather than later.
The definition of prophylactic thinking in chess.

**Prophylaxis**, or **prophylactic thinking**, is the act of focusing not only on stopping your opponent’s immediate threats or tactics, but on preventing their overall plans and goals from becoming reality. It is defined loosely as “future defensive-mindedness” or “thinking defensively about the future.”

As you improve, recognizing and stopping your opponent’s immediate threats isn’t too hard. Yet even for the best players in the world, prophylactic thinking is a skill to be constantly improved. It takes a lot of discipline to think about your opponent first and put your own plans second. It doesn’t sound fun, does it? But it is ultimately the road to chess success. In this game, Frank Marshall just played 1...0-0-0 as Black against World Champion Emanuel Lasker. Did Marshall miss 2.Nxd5? Think about your weaknesses!

**Essential Question, Level V: Synthesis**
Prophylactic thinking in chess is about the proper anticipation and prevention of your opponent’s ideas, plans, and threats. Can you imagine a real-life comparison to emphasize the importance of thinking of others around you, what their goals and plans might be, and how those goals and plans can affect you in a negative or positive way?
Prophylactic thinking, example 2: Lautier, J. – Kasparov, G.
Tilburg 1997 1/2.

In this famous game, the first grandmaster failed to apply prophylactic thinking when he played 20.Rc7?, and the second grandmaster (reigning world champion at the time) failed to punish him. This example, like the previous one, tells us to be aware of our potential weaknesses constantly, even if we don’t see an immediate way for them to be attacked.

The potential weakness we refer to for White is the back rank. After 1.Rc7, a draw was agreed, as both sides simply assumed the c-Pawn would be traded for the b-Pawn. However, 20...c5!! would have won the game for Black! If White plays 21.bxc5 then 21...Rb8, and suddenly White is losing either the b2-Bishop or getting back rank checkmated. If White does nothing after 20...c5, Black will win the b-Pawn. Even the best players in the world forget to consider all of their opponent’s options.

Essential Question, Level V: Synthesis
Suppose you were in this position and were offered a draw. What could you do before accepting the draw? Think about prophylactic thinking!

In this game, the great American champion, Bobby Fischer, has just established his Knight on the strong outpost at d5. He now has the option to keep the Knight on this post and try to develop an attack (likely on the Kingside), or consider trading the Knight for the Bishop on e7, for the chance of winning the d6-Pawn.

Prophylaxis?

1.Nxe7+ would be a terrible move, not only because it gives up the Knight for that big Pawn on e7, but also because after 1...Qxe7 2.Qxd6 would lose immediately to 2...Rfd8!!, either winning White’s Queen or delivering back rank checkmate after 3.Qxe7 Rxd1#. Did you recognize White’s potential weakness as the back rank mate here?

Essential Question, Level IV: Analysis

What is the function of White’s Rook on d1 as it relates to protecting White’s biggest potential weakness on the board—the back rank?

In our final example, it is White to play. Teschner was down a Pawn and so played the move 29.Rxd5?? He clearly was not thinking prophylactically about his weaknesses, or at least not enough. Fortunately for him, however, the great Portisch didn’t notice White’s weakness either.

Portisch responded with 29...Qa6?, completely missing 29...Qf2!!, threatening 30...Qf1 checkmate and winning the game on the spot. 29...Qa6 was met by 30.Ng3, which defended everything. White went onto draw the game despite making that horrific blunder on move 29. Note if after 29...Qf2 Black plays 30.Rxf2 then 30...Re1+ and mate.

Essential Question, Level V: Synthesis
How would you change your own lack of prophylaxis in your chess games to create a different outcome (a win instead of a draw, a draw instead of a loss, etc.) with a more organized thought process?
Part 3: Perpetual Check, Three-Fold Repetition, and the 50-Move Draw

Key Concepts

- What is perpetual check?
- What is three-fold repetition?
- The 50-move draw rule.

Perpetual check: the never-ending-ongoing-eternity of checks.

A perpetual check occurs when one side can force a draw by a never-ending series of checks. These checks must be unavoidable for it to be considered truly perpetual. Often, a perpetual check is used as a bail out when one player is worse, perhaps even losing, without the perpetual.

Here, White is worse, and needs to use the perpetual check (see the moves listed beneath the diagram) in order to save the game. White would have decent drawing chances without it, but best play would surely lead to Black capitalizing on the two-Pawn advantage and winning the game.

Essential Question, Level 1: Knowledge
Why might it make sense to bail out in a position with a draw, rather than play on in an otherwise worse or losing position? Can you explain this to one of your classmates?
Perpetual check can save your bad position.

White’s attack came up short, and so White must take the perpetual check in order to hold a draw.

White has to be careful here with which check to give first, 1.Qd8+ or 1.Qa5+. Which do you think? 1.Qd8+! is necessary. After 1...Ka7 White achieves perpetual with 2.Qa5+ Kb8 3.Qd8+ Ka7 4.Qa5+ Kb8 5.Qd8+, etc. 1.Qa5+ first would lose, as it allows Black’s Bishop to block on a7. After 1...Ba7 2.Qd8+ Bb8 3.Qa5+ and 3...Qa7!, winning.

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**
Assume that White made the mistake of playing 1.Qa5+ first. After the move 3...Qa7 stops the perpetual, how should Black easily win the position? Can you explain a clear step-by-step plan for Black to win?

Our final lessons involve two very important rules that every chess player, scholastic or adult, needs to know. Other than a draw reached by perpetual check, a draw reached by mutual agreement—meaning one player offers a draw and the other accepts—or the classic King versus King draw, there are two other ways a chess game can arrive at a draw, both of them applied in international tournament play.
Three-fold repetition, also known as repetition of position.

Because this rule can be slightly confusing, we will first quote the exact language from the FIDE (International Chess Federation) handbook:

“The game is drawn, upon a correct claim by the player having the move, when the same position, for at least the third time (not necessarily by sequential repetition of moves):

a. is about to appear, if he/she first writes his/her move on his/her scoresheet and declares his/her intention to make this move that repeats the position, or

b. has just appeared, and the player claiming the draw has the move.”

What this means is that when a position has occurred three times in the game, either player can claim a draw on their move. It must be the exact position, however, not a single Pawn changed! But it doesn’t have to be repeated in three consecutive moves, which is what many players incorrectly believe.

**Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge**

Explain the difference between Repetition of Position and Perpetual Check.
The 50-move draw rule: the enforced draw due to lack of progress.

The 50-move draw rule was put in place to prevent players from playing forever in drawn positions. Basically, the rule prevents one side from trying to win solely on time, or by causing his or her opponent fatigue (make them tired). The rule states that a draw can be claimed by either player if fifty moves have been made (by each player) with no captures or Pawn moves on either side.

Making a capture and/or moving a Pawn are two things that suggest progress in chess, so if too many moves go by without either, the game is deemed, or can be claimed, a draw. Fifty moves are considered more than enough time to checkmate the opponent in any of the basic checkmate patterns (Lesson 4, for example). This is another reason why it is important to learn and memorize the basic checkmate patterns!

Essential Question, Level I: Knowledge
How is the 50-move draw rule applied advantageously for chess players?
Lesson 20 Summary and Linking Content to Standards

In Lesson 20, students learned how to put all the skills that they have learned to the test. They focused on how to organize their thoughts and ideas into coherent, well-thought-out plans, while also being aware of the threats their opponents may be trying to execute. Strong critical thinking skills and the ability to discuss one's thinking and ideas with others aligns with the Common Core State Standards: ELA-Literacy: Speaking and Listening. This lesson enhances students' collaboration and communication skills while applying Geometrical skills they have continued to learn and express over the chess board.

The lesson prepared students for competitive tournament situations by showing students how to think and organize strategic plans under pressure. Additionally, they learned how to effectively predict an opponent's threats and stop them by using prophylactic thinking before those threats even happen. Students also learned some important ways in which a game can end in a draw. These three concepts are perpetual check, three-fold repetition, and the 50-move draw rule, all of which can save a student in a position that may seem hopeless and actually force the game to end in a draw and a split point.

Students are now ready for competitive tournament play. These advanced critical thinking skills aid students in utilizing all of the fundamental skills and ideas they have learned in this entire curriculum, as well as aid them in developing the skill of elaborating on their thinking and discussing their ideas collaboratively with others. These skills connect to district-mandated district assessments like Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), where students demonstrate the ability to take information provided and express ideas with others through collaboration. Elaborating on the information provided enables the student to demonstrate knowledge through constructed responses on paper through writing, illustrations, and explanation.
Vertical Alignment: Common Core State Standards K-5

**Speaking and Listening:** ELA-Literacy. SL K-5 Comprehension and Collaboration

**Writing:** ELA-Literacy-Writing K-5: Write and Express Ideas

**Mathematics:** G.A.1 and 2 K-5: Geometry

**Mathematics:** Know Number Names and Count Sequence

**Reading:** Reading Informational Text: RI: K-5

**Phonics and Recognition:** ELA-Literacy.RF.1.3 and 2.3 (1-2)

**Literacy: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use:** ELA-Literacy.L.2.4 and 2.6 (2-5)

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Classroom Activities

Activity 1: Find three, pick one

Activity goal: Recognizing a variety of potential moves in a position, reinforcing critical thinking skills that will help a player develop as a successful tournament player. (Parts 1 - 3)


Geometry: CCSS.Math.Content. G.A.1 (K-5)

Instructions
- Set up full chess boards and sets and pair students.
- Provide students with paper and pencils.
- Before students make a move, they must write down at least three candidate moves for the position. Once they select which move they will ultimately make, they should circle it on the paper.
- Students should play an entire game this way.
- After students complete the game, Coach/Teacher can review the game quickly with them and talk students through their thinking process during critical moments in the game: why they selected a particular move, etc.

Coach/Teacher can also spend an entire class to go through each game played with the entire group of students on the demo board, so students can hear how their peers think, and these complicated concepts can sink in.

Bonus
Repeat the activity, but this time, have the students write down the three moves they think their opponent will play on the next move, pushing students to think outside themselves and install the basics of prophylactic thinking.
Activity 2: I think you played there because...

Activity goal: Recognizing a variety of potential moves in a position, reinforcing critical thinking skills that will help a player develop as a successful tournament player, encouraging players to use prophylactic thinking and be aware of opponent’s threats. (Parts 1 - 3)


Geometry: CCSS.Math.Content. G.A.1 (K-5)

Instructions
- Set up full chess boards and sets and pair students.
- Have students begin to play a normal chess game.
- Every time a student moves, she or he says out loud to his or her opponent after the move, “I think you played there because...” and completes her or his reasoning for the opponent’s move (i.e., to develop a piece, to attack my Queen, to put me in check, etc.).
- Opponent either agrees or disagrees with his partner’s guess. If the partner is wrong, he or she can provide a small hint as to why she or he played the move.

Coach/Teacher can walk around the room during this exercise and listen to the ideas students have about their opponents’ plans, offer suggestions to any struggling students, and reward students who are actively thinking about the moves their partners play.