

Second Edition KNIGHTMARE CHESS™

The Original Game of Chaos on the Chessboard

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*Move a piece. Play a card.
Chess will never be the same . . .*

This is chess . . . with a difference! The goal remains the same: to checkmate the enemy King. But the moves may be a bit unusual . . .

Each player has a deck of cards. Each card modifies the traditional rules of the game in a different way, so every move is a surprise. In *Knightmare Chess*, victory is never certain until the last move.

Building a Deck

Divide the cards equally between the players. Each player now selects 150 points of cards to create his play deck. (You may change this number if you like. With more points, you can play a card every turn. With fewer points, you'll have to conserve your cards. You can even handicap the game by giving the stronger player a smaller deck.) The unused cards are set aside.

The point value of each card is shown in the upper right corner, and is used only when choosing the initial deck. An asterisk (*) beside the value indicates that the card is considered *unique*. Each unique card can appear only once in a deck, even if the deck is built from several sets of cards (see *Multiple Sets*, below).

You should build your deck with a strategy in mind. If you are an aggressive player, pick aggressive cards. If you like using the Queen, pick cards to make her stronger (or to help defend her). Or, if you like the psychological game, choose the cards that will cause the most irritation to your opponent . . .

Setting Up

You'll need a standard chessboard with its pieces set up as usual. Decide who will move first. Shuffle your own deck and draw the top five cards as your beginning "hand." You may look at these cards.

Put the rest of your deck face down. You will draw cards from this deck to replace those you play.

When you play a card, put it on your discard pile, face up. (Some cards let you recover cards from your discard pile – or your opponent's!)

Turn Sequence

As in a regular game of chess, the players alternate turns. However, on each turn, you may play one card from your hand. Each card has a special effect, changing the rules of the game. Some cards modify your regular move. Others add to it, or replace it entirely!

You may also play one card on each of your *opponent's* turns, if you have an appropriate card. Each card can only be played at a specific time, which is shown on the card itself. Some cards can only be played in response to an opponent's card. Others can be played on his turn, even before he uses a card.

You may never play more than one card on your turn, or on your opponent's turn.

When you play a card, put it on the discard pile, face up. The card's effect takes place immediately. Exception: If a card has a continuing effect (see below), place it beside the board to remind both players of that effect. Such a card does not go to the discard pile unless another card cancels it.

Until your deck is used up, your hand must always consist of five cards. Unless you play a card which lets you add a card to your hand (such as "Vulture"), immediately replace each card you play, by drawing the top card from your deck.

When your deck is gone, you do *not* reshuffle the discards – you just have no more cards to draw. Then, when your whole hand is used up, you must finish the game according to the regular rules of chess, modified by any *continuing effect* cards (see below) that are still in play. So try not to run out . . .

Continuing Effects

Most cards change only a single move, but some last indefinitely . . . *even through the whole game*. These are called "Continuing Effect" cards. A card does not have a continuing effect unless it says so at the bottom! When you play a Continuing Effect card, place it beside the chessboard, on your right.

If the initial conditions for a Continuing Effect are no longer met, the Continuing Effect card is not discarded, but the effect is suspended until the initial conditions are once again met.

Transformed Pieces

Some Continuing Effect cards transform a piece, turning it into a new kind of piece with a new name. Place a coin, poker chip, etc., under the piece to mark it. Or use a sticky note. If you put an identical marker on the card, it will be easy to remember which card is affecting which piece!

Unless the creating card specifies otherwise, a transformed piece can be affected by cards that name the original piece.

If a transformed piece is captured and then *immediately* rescued (on that move or the following one) by the play of a card, it keeps its special powers. If a card returns the piece to play later, it returns as the original type of piece.

Moving Without a Card

You are never *required* to play a card. In fact, if you use one every turn, you'll probably run out of cards. When you move without playing a card, you follow all the normal rules of chess . . . subject to any continuing effects of cards already played!

Discarding

After your own turn, if you did not play a card, you may *discard* one card from your hand and draw a replacement. You may not discard on your opponent's turn. Discarded cards are lost, unless another card returns them to play.

The Checkmate Rule

No regular card may directly cause a checkmate situation or the capture of a King! This rule takes precedence over any other rule, or anything on a card. If a played card breaks this rule, it has no effect. It is still considered played; the player must discard it and draw a new card. (It is fine to use a card to *check* the enemy King . . . but you may not use a card to *mate*.)

And you cannot use a before-move card to check the enemy King, and then “capture” it with your regular move. The King cannot be captured!

However, you *could* use a before-move card (say, **Disintegrate**, to remove an obstructing pawn) and then make a regular move to checkmate the enemy King.

Likewise, if any *continuing effect* would cause (or help to cause) a checkmate, that is what happens; the continuing-effect card is not removed from play. (Thus, if a piece has been given permanent special powers by a card, it *can* use those powers to checkmate a King.)

Note also that a piece cannot check or threaten check with a move which a card has made impossible. For instance, if some effect of a card prevents a piece from moving at all, it cannot check the enemy King at all.

Thus, you may place or leave your King in check, if *on the same turn* you play a card to remove the check!

Conflicts

The Checkmate Rule takes precedence over everything. When a card conflicts with any other rule, or with the rules of chess, the card takes precedence.

When two cards appear to conflict, Continuing Effects take precedence. If both, or neither, are Continuing Effects, the last card played takes precedence.

Special Pawn Rules

Any pawn in its owner's first or second rank may make a two-square “initial move,” even if it has already moved. Any pawn making such a move may be captured *en passant*.

Pawns may promote only to Queen, Rook, Knight or Bishop. They may not promote to new types of piece.

Pawns which reach the last rank by any means except a normal Pawn move do not promote unless the card specifically says they *do* promote, and may not promote to a piece which creates an immediate checkmate. If your Pawn reaches the last rank on your *opponent's* move, via a card which allows promotion, it promotes immediately. In case of simultaneous promotions by both players, the moving player must declare first.

Terminology

Adjacent squares: Those which touch the given square either orthogonally or diagonally. Unless a square is on an edge of the board, eight others are adjacent to it.

Lost and Dead: When a card refers to the *loss* or *removal* of a piece, treat it as *captured* for all purposes. Captured pieces may be returned to play by cards. But if a card specifies that a piece is *dead*, set it aside; nothing can return it to play.

Move: The displacement of one piece from one square to another. This can be either a Regular Move, or a move specified by a regular card.

Piece: This term always includes pawns.

Regular card: One without a continuing effect.

Regular move: A move which is legal by the rules of chess, as modified by any continuing-effect cards in play.

Replace: Take a piece from play and put another piece in its place. If a card specifies that the replacement must be a captured piece, *dead* pieces cannot be used.

Return: Take a piece which has been *captured* and put it back into play. *Dead* pieces cannot be returned.

Swap: Exchange positions of two pieces on the board.

Transformed piece: One that has been given a new name and new powers by a continuing-effect card.

Card Name

Point Value

Anatomy of a Card

Effect

When to Play



Turn: The period of one player's action. This normally includes one Move and, optionally, the play or discard of one card. In addition, a card may also be played by the acting player's opponent, either during or immediately after the turn.

Variants

Extra Discards

Before the cards are divided between the players, discard the top 15 to 20. That way, a player who knows the deck cannot assume his opponent has all the cards that he himself does not!

Common Deck

Place all the cards in the middle of the table in one deck, face down. Both players draw their hand of five cards, and all replacements, from this deck. (This is how the original French *Tempête sur l'Echiquier* worked.)

In this version, any time you do not play a card on your *opponent's* turn, you may discard and draw a replacement. You may still discard on your own turn as well.

If you use up all the cards, just reshuffle the discards.

Handicapping

If one player is stronger than the other at *regular* chess, give the less-experienced player more points to work with. A rated player with a deck of 80 to 100 points might be a fair match for an unrated player with 200 points. If it's still no contest, increase the handicap . . .

Personal Sets

Each player starts with his own *Knightmare Chess* set, and creates a deck from his own cards. This way, you can be sure of getting the cards you want . . . but your foe may have some of the same ones.

Multiple Sets

If each player has more than one set of *Knightmare Chess* cards to work from, decks can be even more specialized. You may have several copies of some cards. But a card with a * beside its point value *must* be unique; no deck may contain more than one of any such card.

For more strategy tips and play variants, visit our website at www.sjgames.com and check out the *Knightmare Chess* mailing list at www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/knightmare-list/