

Transfer chess

Transfer chess is played on two boards by four players in teams of two. Normal chess rules apply, except that captured pieces on one board are passed on to the players of the other board, who then have the option of putting these pieces on their board.

The game can be played with a chess clock. Passing and dropping of pieces, can make the game look chaotic and random to the casual onlooker. **Transfer chess** tournaments are occasionally organised at a national and international level.

Partners sit next to each other and one player has black, while the other has white. Each player plays the opponent as in a standard game, with the exception of the rules specified below.

Captured pieces

A player capturing a piece immediately passes that piece to the partner. The partner keeps these pieces in reserve and may, instead of playing a regular move, place one of these pieces on the board. Pieces in reserve or on deck may be placed on any vacant square, including squares where the piece delivers check or checkmate. However pawns may not be dropped on the first and last rank. Pawns don't promote. A pawn placed on the second rank may move two squares on its first move. Each player must keep the reserve or stock pieces on the table in front of the board, always visible to all players of the game.

Clock and completion of a move

Transfer chess is usually played with chess clocks to prevent players from waiting indefinitely for a piece. Clocks are placed on the outside so that each player can see both clocks. At the start of the game, the players with the black pieces start the clocks simultaneously. A move is completed only when the clock is pressed. Touch move is practiced to a lesser extent. When used, it applies to pieces in reserve as well; they are considered dropped after contact has been made with an empty square.

Transfer Chess can be played without a clock, but then there is usually a rule preventing a player waiting for pieces (stalling) indefinitely. One rule states that players may not delay their move beyond the time that it takes for their partner to make three moves.

End of the game

The match ends when either of the games on the two boards ends. A game is won when one player gets checkmated, resigns, forfeits on time or when an illegal move is made in which the offending side is caught. The match can be drawn by agreement or when two players run out of time or are checkmated simultaneously. Depending on (local) rules threefold repetition applies, in which case the reserve of pieces is not taken into account.

When one board finishes, play doesn't continue on the other board. The game is finished.

Communication

Partners are allowed to talk to each other during the game. They can ask for a specific piece, for more trades, ask to hold a piece or suggest moves. You can hear things like "Give me the knight, it mates!" or "Pawn at any cost!" which may lead to seemingly absurd sacrificial captures on the other board. Partners are not allowed to touch pieces on the other board.

Coordination

Captured pieces are passed on and thus what happens on one board, influences what happens on the other board. It is therefore natural for team members to communicate during game play. Another common situation in the interplay between the two boards is a player not moving, also called sitting or stalling. This can happen in anticipation of a certain piece or at the request of the partner. Suppose a player is under heavy attack, and an additional pawn would mate him. When the partner cannot prevent giving up a pawn on the next move, sitting is the only strategy. It would of course be perfectly logical for the attacker to sit as well, waiting for a pawn to come. Apart from this active communication, a good transfer chess player tries to coordinate silently by keeping an eye on the other board and adapting moves accordingly.

Attack and defence

Attacking the king can mean checking the opponent but also controlling vital squares around the king. It is an essential part of transfer chess. From a player's perspective, attacking the king has important advantages as opposed to defending or attempting to win material.

- Because of the possibility of dropping pieces, attacks can quickly lead to checkmate.
- The attacking player has the initiative; he is the one who controls the board, while the opponent is left to react. This has also important consequences for the other board.
- It is easier to attack than to defend. A defending mistake can have bigger consequences than an attacking mistake. Thus, the defender needs to be more precise, which in turn can lead to a time advantage for the attacker.

It is common to sacrifice material to build up, or sustain an attack as in a "piece storm", where a player drops piece after piece with check. Contact checks, those that force the king to move, are especially important. They can be used to drive the king into the open, away from its defenders, while they prevent the opponent from putting new material on the board.

Partner communication is essential in a good defence. When one partner is under attack, the other partner should be aware of which pieces hurt most. Sitting strategies might be necessary, and it is therefore important to play the defence fast. Accepting a sacrifice can be lethal. On the other hand, it results in the attacker having a piece less to play with, with the defender's partner having a piece more. Sacrifices therefore give the partner of the defender an opportunity to take initiative.