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James Eade

United States Chess Federation chess master



Chess FOR DUMMIES® 3RD EDITION

by James Eade

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About the Author

James Eade began taking chess seriously in 1972, when Bobby Fischer was taking the chess world by storm. He competed on his high school and college teams and became a United States Chess Federation (USCF) chess master in 1981. In 1984 he became a USCF correspondence chess master as well. International organizations awarded him the master title in 1990 (for correspondence) and in 1993 (for regular tournament play), but his chess-playing career has gradually given way to chess writing, organizing, and teaching.

James has written three other books on chess: *Remember the MacCutcheon* (Chess Enterprises), *San Francisco, 1995* (Hypermodern Press), and *The Chess Player's Bible* (Barron's). He has written numerous articles for a variety of magazines and has edited both the *Golden Gate Chess News* and the *California Chess Journal*.

In 1991 James began taking an interest in chess political organizations and was elected vice president of CalChess, the Northern California Chess Association, later that year. In 1995 he became CalChess president and was also elected to be president of the Chess Journalists of America. In 1996 he was elected to the USCF's policy board, the executive committee charged with oversight of the multi-million-dollar corporation. He was appointed zone president for the United States for the Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE) from 2000 to 2002 and has served on the U.S. Charitable Chess Trust board of trustees since 2000. He was elected president of the Trust in 2010.

James holds a master's degree in organization development from the University of San Francisco and still bristles at being called a chess nerd.

Dedication

To Sheri — for suffering chess fools gladly.

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Introduction

Some chess players hate to hear someone call chess a game. They think that doing so trivializes what is actually a profound intellectual activity. Try as they may, however, chess enthusiasts seem incapable of convincingly placing chess solely in the context of art, science, or sport. Uncannily, chess contains elements of all three — and yet chess remains a game.

Actually, I prefer to think of chess as a game — the best game ever invented. Chess is a game loved by engineers and free-verse poets alike. It imposes a set of rules and has finite limits, but just as you start to think that you're finally solving its mysteries, it thwarts you. As a result, sometimes the game is frustrating, but far more often, chess proves to be both surprising and delightful. The deeper you dig into chess, the more of its secrets you unearth — but interestingly enough, the game has never been tapped out. Even today's monster computers are far from playing the theoretically perfect chess game.

To master chess, you must combine a kind of discipline normally associated with the hard sciences and a creative freedom akin to the inspiration of artists. Few people develop both aspects equally well, and few activities can help you do so. Chess, however, is one such activity. The methodical scientist is forced to tap into his creative energies to play well. The fanciful artist must, in turn, conform to certain specific principles or face the harsh reality of a lost game. Not only is chess an excellent educational tool that helps strengthen both sides of your brain, but the game is also an endless source of pleasure.

After most people discover that I play chess, they usually say, "You must be very smart." They should instead say, "You must have a lot of spare time." Chess has been played throughout history by people with above-average leisure time, not necessarily by people with far-above-average intelligence — so if you don't consider yourself in the "I-aced-the-MCAT" crowd, fear no more.

As a matter of fact, chess tutors can teach preschoolers the rules of the game. (So maybe they can't get the tots to stop chewing on the pieces, but they *can* teach the youngsters how to play.) In fact, anyone can learn how to play chess with a bit of spare time. And you don't even need too much of that to learn the rules.

About This Book

This book is designed to help you become a better chess player in several ways:

- ✓ First, it contains a great deal of information and advice on how to play chess. You can read the book from cover to cover, or you can read only the sections or chapters that interest you — it's completely your call.
- ✓ You also find in these pages information about how to talk about chess, which, to many players, is at least as important as knowing how to play. (Part of the fun of chess is the social element involved in discussing other people's games — called *kibitzing*.)
- ✓ Finally, this book offers numerous suggestions on how to find other players who are just about at your own level (and how to mind your chess manners when you sit down to play!).

If you're a beginner, the great joys of chess await you. If you're an intermediate player, you can find in this book a wealth of material to help you improve your game and to enjoy chess even more.

Conventions Used in This Book

Throughout this book, I use diagrams of actual chessboards to show the positions I discuss. This convention should sometimes eliminate the need for you to have a chessboard and set in order to use the book — but even so, following along with an actual board and set is better. Just note that in these diagrams, the white pieces always start at the bottom of the chessboards, and the black pieces start at the top.

Here are a few other conventions to keep in mind:

- ✓ Throughout this book, I refer to moves with chess notation, which I usually place in parentheses. You can skip over this stuff if you don't want to find out how to decipher it, but if notation interests you, you can flip to Chapter 6 whenever you're up to the challenge. (Understanding it really isn't tough, though — believe me!)
- ✓ I use **boldface** to highlight the key words in bulleted lists and the action steps in numbered lists.
- ✓ I use *italics* whenever I define a chess term. You can use the glossary as a quick reference for these terms, as well as a resource to discover other chess words.