

A PLACE ON THE BOARD

Sage's First Chess Journey



Robert Wescott

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First edition

Illustrations created with AI assistance; art direction by Robert Wescott.

An illustrated story followed by a beginner chess guide.

For ages 5–8, with an adult-led starting route for ages 3–5.

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On game day, a chessboard spread across the village green, its squares wide enough for Sage to stand inside.

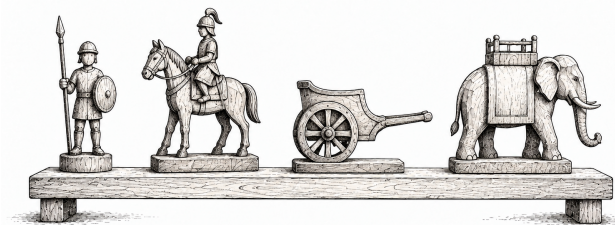
She stopped beside a queen that reached her knee and touched the points of its crown.

That was the piece she wanted.

Beside the board stood four little carvings: a foot soldier, a horse and rider, a chariot, and an elephant.

They represented parts of an army in an early game from India called chaturanga.

Over many centuries, that game helped give rise to chess.



Sage bent over the little foot soldier.

No horse. No wheels. Not even an elephant.

She glanced back at the queen.

Carrying that tall, splendid piece across the green would be a job people noticed.



The two players sat at opposite ends of the board. Their helpers would carry the pieces, and anyone could suggest a move.

“Black and I take turns choosing moves,” said the woman playing White. “After a while, you helpers can try different pieces.”





The helpers drew picture cards from a bag.
Sage opened hers.

A pawn.

She was shown her piece in the front row. It had
a round head and no crown at all.

She folded the card very small and slipped it
into her pocket.

Start small, together

Choose one activity. You do not need to finish this guide in order.

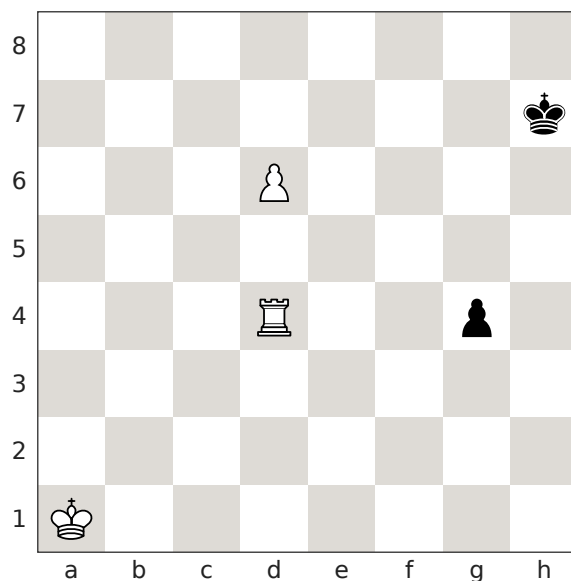
Look together: match pieces on page 25. **Play together:** deliver with a rook (page 29), find bishop paths (page 31), jump with a knight (page 34), or race pawns (page 36). **Try another way:** help a king on page 40.

For ages 3–5, begin with matching or one rook and an adult. For ages 5–8, follow your child’s interest and readiness.

Use a real board. Pointing counts. Repeat a favorite or stop for today. White is at the bottom of every board. Flags mark targets, not pieces.

The rook: straight lines

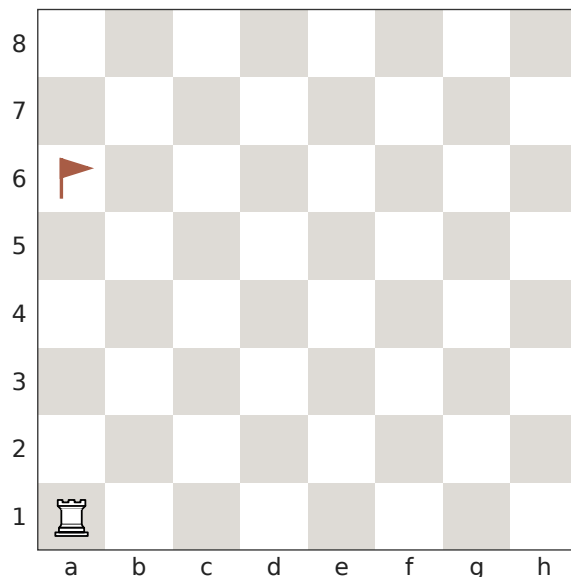
A rook moves along a row or column, as far as you choose. It cannot jump over pieces. A piece blocks its path. Stop before it, or capture it if it belongs to your opponent. **Try:** Point to an empty square the rook can reach. Can it take the black pawn?



White to move. The rook can capture the black pawn on g4. Your pawn on d6 blocks the way beyond d5.

Rook delivery

Use one rook. Copy the picture. Can you deliver the rook to the flag? Slide along a row or column. You may take more than one move.



Swap jobs. Your child points to a new target; you make the delivery. Stop when you arrive, or choose another target.

A little help: trace a straight path first. The pictured rook starts on a1; the flag is on a6.