FLAG CHESS, LLC

Flag Chess Official Rules

Version 1.2 — October 2026

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Introduction

Flag Chess is a strategy game defined by three structural modifications: the Flag, the Sentinel, and the burst. The Flag and Sentinel are pieces native to the game — the Flag serving as the sovereign piece and central objective of play, and the Sentinel introducing unique strategic and positional dynamics. The Flag and each starting Sentinel possess a one-time burst — a finite tempo resource that shapes strategic decision-making throughout the game.

Objective

The objective is to achieve flagmate while protecting your own Flag. Flagmate occurs when a player's Flag is in check and that player has no legal move that removes the check. The Flag is in check when it is under threat of capture by an opponent's piece on the opponent's next move. If the player to move is not in check and has no legal move with any piece, the game is a draw by stalemate.

Standard Rules of Chess

Except where explicitly modified by these rules, all standard chess rules apply. In all standard rules, the Flag takes the place of the King.

Setup

The game is played on a standard 8×8 board. The Flag begins on e1 for White and e8 for Black. Each player begins with six pawns and two Sentinels, with the Sentinels occupying the b-file and g-file pawn positions. All other pieces begin in standard positions.

Piece Movement

Standard pieces: Pawn, Knight, Bishop, Rook, and Queen move according to their standard definitions.

Flag: Moves and captures one square in any direction.

Sentinel: Moves and captures one square diagonally in any direction, remaining on the same color throughout the game.

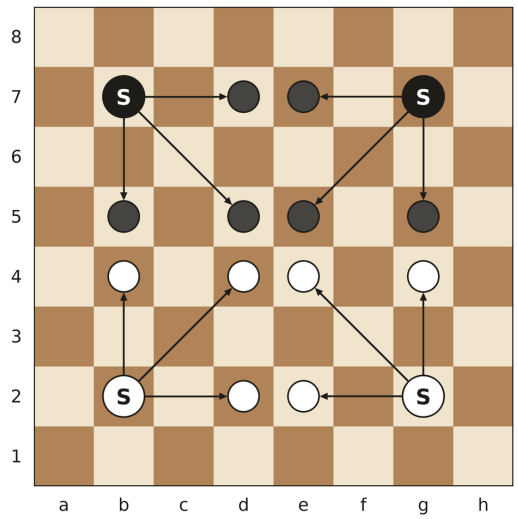
Burst Rules

General: A burst is a finite positional resource. Each piece with burst ability has a single opportunity to use it during the game. A burst moves a piece exactly two squares along a clear path. All squares along the burst path, including the destination square, must be unoccupied. A piece may not jump or capture during a burst. While a player's Flag is in check, all burst abilities for that player are suspended until the check is resolved. The player who delivered the check is unaffected and may still use any available burst abilities. Once the check is resolved, any suspended burst abilities are restored. A suspended burst is not a legal move for any purpose. A burst that can legally be made is a legal move for all purposes, including stalemate. If the only move that would remove a check is a burst, the position is flagmate.

Sentinel Burst: A Sentinel may use its burst only from its original starting square at the beginning of the game, and only if its first move of the game is that burst. Moving off the starting square without bursting forfeits that Sentinel's burst ability for the remainder of the game. This forfeiture applies only to that individual Sentinel and does not affect the other Sentinel. A Sentinel burst moves exactly two squares forward, diagonally inward, or horizontally inward. Forward means toward the opponent's side of the board; inward means toward the d- and e-files.

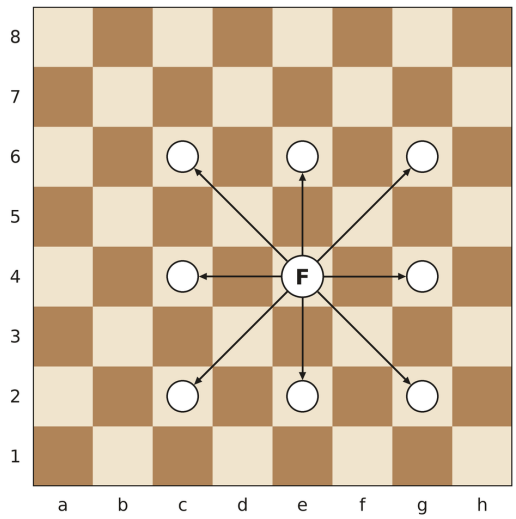
Flag Burst: The Flag may use its burst only once per game. It moves exactly two squares in a single straight line in any direction, including diagonally. The Flag may not burst into, out of, or through check.

Sentinel Burst Options



A Sentinel's burst can be used only as its first move of the game: two squares forward, diagonally inward, or horizontally inward, along a clear path, without capturing. Any other first move gives up that burst.

Flag Burst Options



The Flag's burst can be used once, at any time in the game: two squares in any straight line, along a clear path, without capturing, and never into, out of, or through check.

White pieces are shown in white, Black pieces in black. Sentinels start on b2 and g2 (White) and b7 and g7 (Black); the Flag is shown on e4. Both Flags burst the same way.

Special Rules

Castling: Standard rules apply using flagside and queenside terminology. A Flag that has moved, including by burst, may not castle.

En passant: En passant functions exactly as in standard chess and applies only between pawns on immediately adjacent files. Sentinel movement and burst do not create or extend en passant opportunities.

Pawn Promotion: A pawn reaching the final rank must be promoted to a Queen, Rook, Bishop, Knight, or Sentinel. A promoted Sentinel has no burst and remains on the color of its promotion square.

Draw Conditions

Standard chess draw conditions apply, including stalemate, threefold repetition, the fifty-move rule, and dead positions in which no sequence of legal moves could lead to flagmate for either player. For threefold repetition, two positions are the same only if the remaining burst rights of both players are also the same. A burst is neither a pawn move nor a capture and does not reset the fifty-move count.

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Creator's Note

Non-rules context. This note does not modify the rules.

> *The Flag's burst can be used only once, and that changes some endgames. In standard chess, king-and-pawn endgames turn on opposition and tempo: whoever must give ground first often loses the position. An unused Flag burst is a tempo in reserve: it reaches in one move a square that would otherwise take two, and that can flip the opposition. Used at the right moment, it can turn a position that standard chess would count as lost into a draw, or a drawn one into a win.*
>
> *This is intentional. Both players begin with one Flag burst, and once used, it is gone. A burst spent in the opening buys something now with a resource that may be needed forty moves later. And a burst still in hand is not always a burst that can be played: the path may be blocked, or the Flag may be in check or have to pass through it. Chess players carry a body of endgame knowledge: opposition, the square of the pawn, which pawn endings are drawn. While a burst remains, that knowledge has to be re-examined. Flag Chess endgames are their own theory.*
>
> — Justin Hayes, inventor

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