

# HYDRA CHESS – Rules

1. Capture your opponent's king to win (checkmate may not be enough).
2. All pieces move as they do in classical chess (pawns move 1 or 2 spaces on their first move).
3. There is no *en passant*, but **pawns do promote** if they reach an opponent's back row.

## SETUP

Begin with all chess pieces OFF the **HYDRA** board, one color along each side, in full view. These are “reserve” pieces. One player shuffles the red cards (16) and the other shuffles the black cards (16) into random order, keeping them face down (not even seeing the bottom card). Each player then flips his top 5 cards face-up and lays them near the back row (Hydra row) on his side of the board. The chess pieces corresponding to the cards are then placed onto the Hydra row of the board in the same order. Each player then stacks his face-up cards in a pile. All four stacks of cards remain in full view of both players for the duration of the game.

## START

*Before the first move:* **If any king or queen is in immediate check** at least one player must reshuffle (either his original 5 cards, or his entire deck) and adjust the pieces on his Hydra row. Then:

**The game begins** when one player takes the initiative by moving any piece on the board (of either color) to a legitimate octagon.

His opponent then has the option of playing a piece from the *unmoved set* (switching seats if necessary) thus initializing regular game play **OR** he may commandeer his opponent's first move and starting set, (switching seats if necessary) after which his opponent *must* play the unmoved set to the end of the game.

**If neither player is willing to take the first move** it's because both want to play the same color.

In that case the player sitting *behind* the desired color may trade seats with his opponent, then take the first move of the game, or he may remain where he is and move second. The choice is completely his.

The game then proceeds as in classical chess except that **whenever any piece moves off a player's Hydra row** he immediately flips his top face-down card, places it on his face-up pile, and moves the corresponding piece from his reserves onto the vacant octagon. Each player must instantly populate the vacant octagons of his own back row until a king is captured, or until players' reserve pieces deploy completely, at which time the game plays to its natural end as in classical chess.

## HYDRA-CASTLING

If you have **the only king on the board**, OR if your opponent has **the only queen on the board**, AND your king is on an octagon of your own Hydra row, you may use one of your turns to *HYDRA-castle* (switch) your king with ANY same-color piece on your own back row.

HYDRA-castling may be done only once per game, and by only one player, even if his king has moved off and returned to his back row, and **even if his king is directly in check, or checkmate.\***

## STRATEGY

**Sage Advice:** *There will be shocking twists – remain calm and play on. DON'T GIVE UP because the final outcome is rarely predictable, even late in the game.*

Except for the back rows HYDRA is essentially\*\* standard chess, so the most important thing to understand is how the back rows affect play. The most dangerous fact about your back row is that when one of your pieces leaves it to escape attack, whatever piece appears on that octagon immediately after is a sitting duck. And if it's your king, **YOU'LL LOSE THE GAME**. There is no “check” giving you a chance to move out of danger. Keep this in mind. Before moving a threatened piece off your back row always note the pieces remaining in your reserve pool (unless you're feeling lucky!)

\* Castling was originally designed to protect the king when its pawns moved away or were killed. In HYDRA chess this protection is especially important when there is only one king on the board and little (or no) initial protection. HYDRA-castling provides minimal/temporary/vital protection.

\*\* *essentially* – the smaller board leaves less room to escape, forcing more kills than in classical chess.