

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 in a line behind the back row (HYDRA row) of 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 5 face-up cards in a pile next to his face-down pile. All four stacks of cards must remain in full view of both players for the duration of the game.

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:

START

SIMPLE START:

- A:** If both players prefer their own starting set, rock-paper-scissors to determine who moves first.
B: If both players want their opponent's color they switch seats and rock-paper-scissors for first move.
C: If both players want the **same** color, the player sitting behind the desired color may trade seats with his opponent and then take the first move of the game, or he may keep his color and move second. The choice is his.

(optional) STRATEGIC START:

The game begins when either player takes the initiative by moving one piece on the board (of either color) to a legitimate octagon. His opponent then has the option of accepting the *unmoved set* as his own (switching seats if necessary) **OR** he may commandeer his opponent's first move and starting set as his own (switching seats if necessary). After making his choice, whichever player now has the empty spot on his HYDRA (back) row must flip the top card from his face-down pile, place it on his face-up pile, and move the corresponding piece from his reserves onto the vacant octagon to complete his move. The other player then takes his turn.

The game proceeds as in classical chess except that **every time a piece moves off a player's HYDRA row** he must immediately flip his top (face-down) card, place it on his face-up pile, and move the corresponding piece from his reserves onto the vacant octagon. Each player must instantly populate the vacant octagons of his own HYDRA row until a king is captured, or until players' reserve pieces deploy completely, at which time the game plays on 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** if 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.***

* 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.