

# Chaturaji

**Players** 4

**Length** 10–180 minutes

**Equipment** one standard piecepack

**Version** 2.1 (2022-07-29)

## Description

Chaturaji (aka Chaturanga for four players aka Choupat) is an old four-person chess variant. The diceless version is playable with a single standard piecepack, the version with dice either needs an additional two dice (preferably four-sided) or alternatively 2-4 extra game pieces<sup>1</sup> to free up two piecepack dice from game piece duty. There are several rule variants for Chaturaji. Below we'll give the rules for a modern simplified diceless Chaturaji variant.

## Objective

Capture both of the opposing team's kings.<sup>2</sup>

## Setup

Chaturaji is played on an 8-by-8 board made with the backs of 16 tiles. Each player needs 8 game pieces of the same suit: one piecepack pawn as *king*, one ace-valued coin as *horse*, one 2-valued coin as *boat*, 1 3-valued die<sup>3</sup> as *elephant*, and 4 remaining coins face down as *pawns*. Ownership of *horses* and *boats* are only distinguished by orientation. There are two teams: each player will be on a team with the player whose pieces start across the board (diagonally) from them. Figure 1 shows the recommended setup.

## The Order of Play

Each player rolls a die<sup>4</sup> to see who goes first. Play then proceeds in clockwise order. On their move each player moves one piece to another cell possibly capturing an opponent's piece located at that cell.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For example piecepack "pawn saucers".

<sup>2</sup>Other variants have different objectives such as scoring the most points by capturing pieces or alternatively winning the most stakes by moving the king to other players' *thrones*.

<sup>3</sup>If you want to play a variant with dice and need to free up piecepack dice could replace with piecepack "pawn saucers" (or extra game pieces).

<sup>4</sup>You may need to temporarily borrow your *elephant*.

<sup>5</sup>If a player has no legal move available to them their move is skipped.

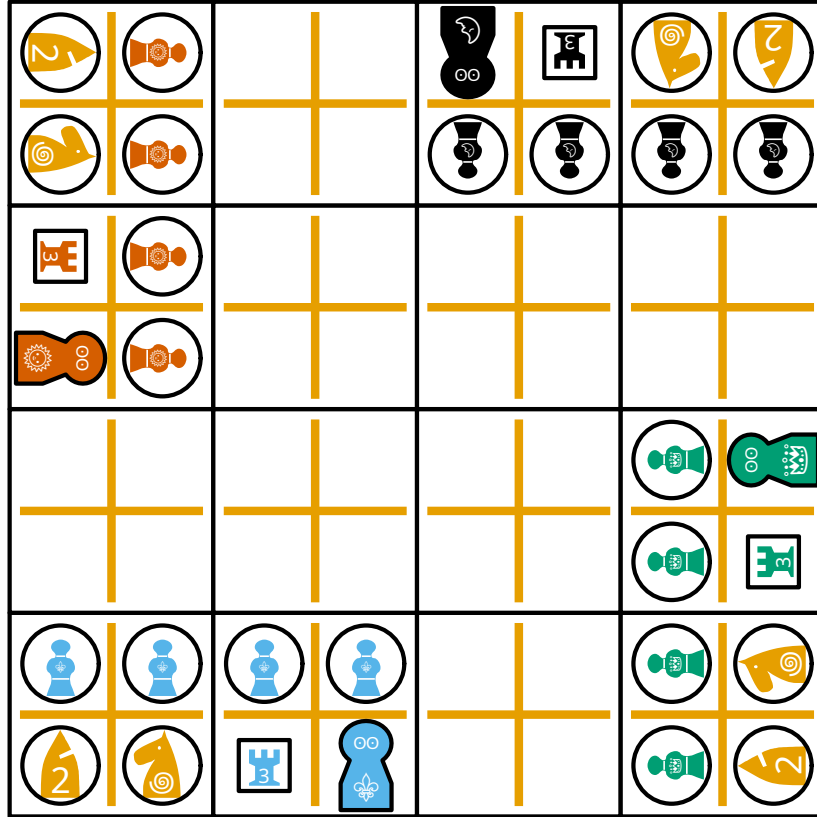


Figure 1: Chaturaji starting diagram

## The Moves

- Except for the pawn, each piece's capturing move and non-capturing move is the same.
- You can't capture any piece on your team.
- Only the horse and boat may jump over other pieces during its move.

### Pawn

- Only the pawn has a different capturing and non-capturing move.
- The pawn's non-capturing move is to move forward orthogonally one cell.
- The pawn's capturing move is to move forward diagonally one cell.









Piece	Name	Betza
	Pawn	fcFfmW
	Horse	N
	Boat	A
	Elephant	R = WW
	King	K = FW

Table 1: Chaturaji pieces with Betza notation

- When a pawn reaches the last rank and that player had previously lost a horse, boat, or elephant then it must *promote* to one of those previously captured pieces.<sup>6</sup> If that player had not previously lost a horse, boat, or elephant then the pawns stays in that cell (unable to move)—however once that player’s horse, boat, or elephant is captured the pawn immediately promotes to that piece.<sup>7</sup>

**Horse**  The horse moves diagonally one cell (“jumping” over any piece on this cell) and then orthogonally one cell (further away from its original position).<sup>8</sup>

**Boat**  The boat moves diagonally two cells (jumping over any piece).

**Elephant**  The elephants moves orthogonally in a straight line.<sup>9</sup>

**King** 

- The king moves one cell either orthogonally or diagonally.
- A player can still move pieces after a king is taken.<sup>10</sup>
- A team loses if both players’ kings get captured.<sup>11</sup>

## Additional Resources

- [www.ludism.org/ppwiki/Chaturaji](http://www.ludism.org/ppwiki/Chaturaji)
- [boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/18011](http://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/18011)
- [www.chessvariants.com/historic.dir/chaturang4.html](http://www.chessvariants.com/historic.dir/chaturang4.html)

<sup>6</sup>In this variation no promotion to a king is allowed.

<sup>7</sup>Assuming the immobile pawn is not captured beforehand.

<sup>8</sup>This description is equivalent to moving two cells horizontally and one cell vertically OR one cell horizontally and two cells vertically (jumping over any pieces).

<sup>9</sup>This is in contrast with other historical chess variants where an “elephant” usually moves diagonally.

<sup>10</sup>This is different from some Chaturaji variants. Also, unlike other variants there is no exchanging captured kings.

<sup>11</sup>But unlike in (international) chess players need not move out of check or avoid placing

- [www.cynningstan.com/game/124](http://www.cynningstan.com/game/124)
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaturaji](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaturaji)
- R. Wayne Schmittberger, *New Rules for Classic Games* (1992), 99–103

## Credits

**Game design:** Traditional, adapted by Trevor L. Davis

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their king into check.