

Additional Resources

- www.ludism.org/ppwiki/Chaturaji
- boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/18011
- www.chessvariants.com/historic.dir/chaturang4.html
- www.cyclingstan.com/game/124
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaturaji
- R. Wayne Schmittberger, *New Rules for Classic Games* (1992), 99–103

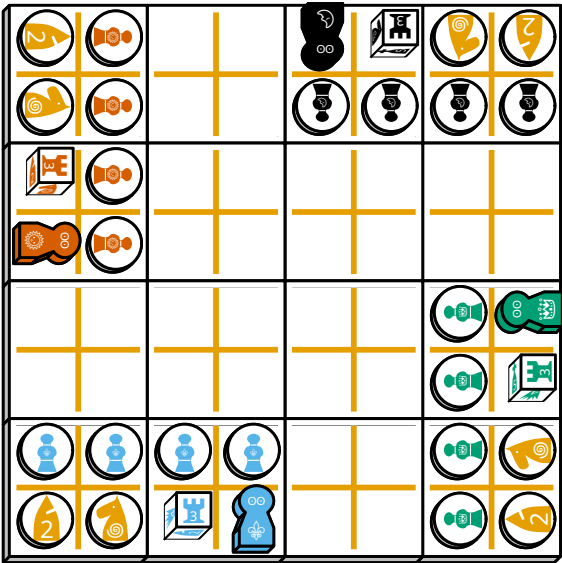
Chaturaji

Players 4
Length 10–180 minutes
Equipment one standard piecepack
Version 2.1 (2022-07-29)

Credits

Game design: Traditional, adapted by Trevor L. Davis

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Chaturaji

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 pieces¹ 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.²

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 die³ 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 die⁴ 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.⁵

¹For example piecepack "pawn saucers".
²Other 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*.
³If 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).
⁴You may need to temporarily borrow your *elephant*.
⁵If a player has no legal move available to them their move is skipped.

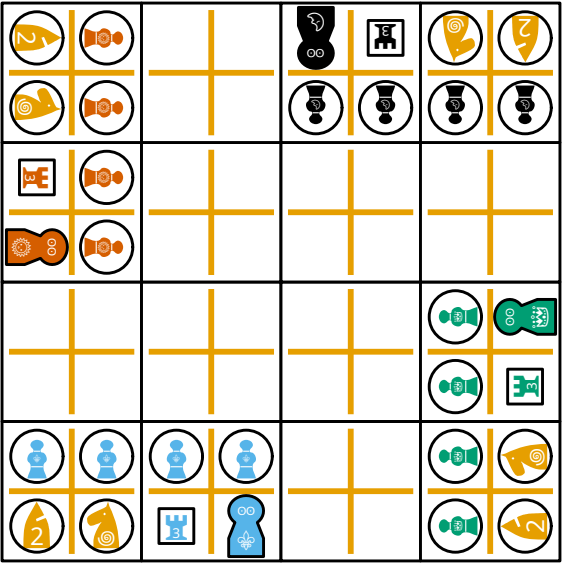


Figure 1: Chaturaji starting diagram

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.





















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

Table 1: Chaturaji pieces with Betza notation

- 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.
- 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.⁶ 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.⁷

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).⁸

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

Elephant     The elephants moves orthogonally in a straight line.⁹

King    

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

⁶In this variation no promotion to a king is allowed.
⁷Assuming the immobile pawn is not captured beforehand.
⁸This description is equivalent to moving two cells horizontally and one cell vertically OR one cell horizontally and two cells vertically (jumping over any pieces).
⁹This is in contrast with other historical chess variants where an "elephant" usually moves diagonally.
¹⁰This is different from some Chaturaji variants. Also, unlike other variants there is no exchanging captured kings.
¹¹But unlike in (international) chess players need not move out of check or avoid placing their king into check.