



Chess

Scouts BSA · Hobbies

Name

Started

Completed

Chess is a game of planning, patience, and creative thinking that people have enjoyed for centuries. This badge helps you sharpen your game, learn from famous players, and share chess with others. Whether you're new or experienced, you'll get better with every game.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/chess/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

1 Chess history and famous players

Tips for this section: Pick a famous player whose story interests you and learn how they became great.

Example for this section: Research a famous player like Bobby Fischer, Judit Polgár, or Magnus Carlsen. Share how they learned the game, one famous game or moment, and what made their style different, like Polgár beating a former world champion in a match as a teenager.

- ☐ **1a** Discuss the history of chess with your counselor

- ☐ **1b** Research a famous chess player and what they achieved, and discuss it with your counselor

2 Why chess matters

Tips for this section: Think about how chess helps you focus and plan ahead. Practice good etiquette like shaking hands before and after games.

- ☐ **2a** Discuss with your counselor why chess is called a game of planning and strategy

- ☐ **2b** Discuss with your counselor how chess builds critical thinking, concentration, and decision-making, and how those skills help in other parts of life

- ☐ **2c** Discuss sportsmanship and chess etiquette with your counselor

- ☐ **3** Show your counselor you know each item below, then use Scouting EDGE to teach someone who doesn't know how to play chess

Tip: Teach a younger sibling or friend one piece at a time. Play a practice game with them once they know the moves.

Example: Teach a younger sibling or Scout one piece at a time, starting with pawns-only games where the goal is to get a pawn to the other side. Add a new piece each game, then play a full game with them and let them ask "is this legal?" as much as they want.

- ☐ **3a** The name of every chess piece

- ☐ **3b** How to set up the board

- ☐ **3c** How every piece moves and captures, including the 4 castling rules, en passant, pawn promotion, check, ways out of check, and checkmate

- ☐ **3d** The 5 ways a chess game can end as a draw

4 Notation, game phases, and openings

Tips for this section: Write down the moves of a game you play using chess notation. Replay it later to see what you could improve.

Example for this section: Record a game you play in algebraic notation, like 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6. Then mark where the opening ended and the middlegame began, and point out where you followed or broke opening principles like controlling the center and castling early.

- ☐ **4a** Show how to keep score with algebraic chess notation

- ☐ **4b** Discuss how the opening, middlegame, and endgame differ

- ☐ **4c** Explain 4 opening principles, and show your counselor the first 5 moves of the Ruy Lopez, French Defense, Queen's Gambit Declined, and Sicilian Defense

- ☐ **4d** Show on a board the Fool's Mate, Scholar's Mate, Légal Mate, Noah's Ark Trap, and Fried Liver Attack

5 Strategy, tactics, and endgames

Tips for this section: Solve a few checkmate puzzles each day. Books and free puzzle websites make this fun.

Example for this section: Explain the difference with an example: strategy is your long-term plan, like putting a rook on an open file; a tactic is a short combination, like a knight fork that attacks the king and queen at once. Then solve checkmate positions with your counselor.

- ☐ **5a** Explain 4 of these strategy elements: king safety, pawn structure, space, tempo, force, exploiting weaknesses, and clock management

- ☐ **5b** Explain any 5 of these tactics: fork, pin, skewer, decoy, double attack, double check, discovered attack, clearance sacrifice, interposing, overloading, overprotecting, remove the defender, zugzwang, zwischenzug

5c Force checkmate (White to move)

- ☐ **5c1** Force checkmate with White king e1 and rooks a1 and h1 against Black king e5

- ☐ **5c2** Force checkmate with White king e1 and queen d1 against Black king e5

- ☐ **5c3** Force checkmate with White king e1 and rook a1 against Black king e5

5d King and pawn endgame (White Kd4, pawn e3; Black Ke6)

- ☐ **5d1** With White to move, show how White forces Black to let the pawn reach the last rank and promote to a queen

- ☐ **5d2** With Black to move, show how Black forces a draw

- ☐ **5e** Set up and solve 5 direct-mate problems your counselor gives you

- ☐ **6** Explain to your counselor how chess tournaments work: Swiss system and round robin formats, how each round is paired, time controls, the touch-move rule, scoring, and ratings

Tip: Watch or play in a tournament and notice how pairings, clocks, and scoring work.

7 Play and compete: Choose 1 of 3

Tips for this section: Join a school chess club, play friends, or help run a small tournament for your troop.

Example for this section: To organize a troop tournament: pick a format like a four-round Swiss, gather boards and timers, make a pairing chart, explain the rules and touch-move at the start, and post results after each round.

- ☐ **7a** Play at least 3 games against other Scouts and/or your counselor, then go back through each game using your score sheets and talk with your counselor about what you could have done differently

- ☐ **7b** Play in a scholastic (youth) tournament, replay your games from the score sheets with your counselor, and discuss what you could have done differently

- ☐ **7c** Organize and run a tournament with at least 4 players besides you, where each player plays at least 2 games