Stalemate is one of the strangest things in chess. It nearly always confuses beginners, but it has a confusing history.

A definition: The player whose turn it is to move has no legal move to play but his/her king is not in check. The result of the game is a draw by stalemate.

Currently it counts as a draw, but it has, in the past been:

- Win for White
- Half a win for White
- Win for Black
- Win for player administering stalemate
- Loss for player administering stalemate
- Not allowed

One more example

White to move.


Three of White’s four moves lose, so Anand played

65 Kg4-h5
Now nine of Black’s ten moves lose for him, so Kramnik replied 65...Ke4xf5
Stalemate.

**Pawn Promotion**

When a pawn reaches its far end of the board, it must be immediately “promoted” to a piece (as part of the same move).

Most beginners think that a pawn MUST be promoted to a queen, and that was, indeed, the rule for hundreds of years. The unfortunate use of the word “queening” tends to prolong the misconception.

At other times, the pawn had to be promoted according to the file it stood on (Q if on e-file).

Nowadays, there is a full range of choice: N, B, R or Q.

In the first diagram, it is Black to move. He plays e2-e1.

As part of the same move, he replaces the pawn with his choice of the four possible pieces.

Here he has chosen a rook and it is now White’s move.

Pawn promotion means that it is possible, although incredibly rare, for a player to have on the board, as a result of 8 pawn promotions:

- 10 knights
- 10 bishops (9 of the same colour square is possible!)
- 10 rooks
- 9 queens
- Or some combination thereof

Historical oddity. World Champion William Steinitz endorsed a British Chess Association rule that you could leave the pawn as a pawn. There is method in the madness, as you can see from this position.

1 b7xaQ (or R or B or N)
loses to 1...g4xh3

There is no answer to the threat of 2...h3-h2 checkmate.

However, 1 b7xa8P!! draws.

If Black takes on h3, it's stalemate.

If Black does not take on h3, then 2 Bh3xg2 is an easy draw.

**Castling**

This is a move of the king and either rook of the same colour along the player’s first rank, counting as a single move of the king and executed as follows: the king is transferred from its original square two squares towards the rook on its original square, then that rook is transferred to the square the king has just crossed.

There are two batches of 3 pre-requisites:

- The king must never have moved during the game
- The rook must never have moved
- The squares between them must be empty

In addition:

- The king may not castle if he is in check
- The king may not castle if he would be in check upon completion of the move
- The king may not pass across an attacked square (not allowed to “castle through check”).

**NB:**

These last three points apply ONLY to the king, not to the rook.

When castling queenside, it does not matter for White whether the b1 (b8 for Black) square is attacked – the king neither arrives there, nor passes across it.

The four diagrams show the position before and after:

**First pair:**

- White K-side castling
- Black Q-side castling

**Second pair:**
- White Q-side castling
- Black K-side castling

**En Passant capture**

The definition from the FIDE Laws:

A pawn attacking a square crossed by an opponent’s pawn which has advanced two squares in one move from its original square may capture this opponent’s pawn as though the latter had been moved only one square. This capture is only legal on the move following this advance and is called an ‘en passant’ capture.

These two diagrams show the before and after of:

1...e7-e5

2 d5xe6  (‘en passant’ is French for ‘in passing’)

The en passant capture was not universally adopted until 1880.

A practical example.

Black has just played ...e7-e5.

White responded with d5xe6+.

That discovered check from the Bf4 is just one of the odd things that can happen with en passant captures.


White has just played f2-f4.

Before that move, the g4 pawn was pinned by the Ra4.

Now the pawn is **both** pinned and not pinned!!:

...g4-g3 is legal, but the en passant capture (g4xf3+) is not, because that would put the black king in check.