9 The Knight

Each player has two knights.

The knight moves in quite different fashion to the other chessmen we have seen. Each of the eight squares that this knight can move to is marked with an "x".

The move of the knight is often described as being "L" shaped.

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Here, the white knight stands on e4.

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The move of the knight is often described as being "L" shaped. But that, not surprisingly, causes confusion, especially with younger kids, because only one of the 8 moves is a true "L" (Ne4-f2).

I much prefer the description:

The knight can leap to the nearest square of the opposite colour to the one it is standing on, except for those it is standing next to.

Of course, it can't move to a square occupied by a team member, but it can leap over obstacles, be they team members or enemy units.

Here they are, two white, two black, where they start the game.

They start opposite one another.

They start on the b-file and the g-file (on their "back" rank).

Each player has one knight start on a light square and one on a dark square, but, since they hop from one coloured square to another, they soon become indistinguishable.
The white knight can still move to any one of the eight marked squares.

It just hops over the enemy knights as though they did not exist.

The knight is one of the three chessmen that never x-ray any squares.

When hopping over obstacles, the knight does not care what they are.

Nor does it care whose side they are on, although that may prove to be important after it lands.

Here, it is unlikely to want to hop to f2, g3 or g5.

It is important to remember that the knight captures in the same way that the king, rook, bishop and queen do – “eating” an enemy something that was previously occupying the square that the knight has just landed on.

The knight does not capture anything that it leaps over.

Black to move.

Can his knight take anything? (answer)

What? (answer)

Can the black knight move somewhere to check the king? (answer)

In terms of reduced mobility, the knight suffers even more than the bishop when it finds itself on the edge of the board or in a corner.

A central knight can reach 8 squares.

On the edge – at most 4.

Only 3 if it is on the edge close to a corner.
In a corner, it has only 2 squares within reach.

A simple maze.

You should start with d5 and then you can go clockwise:

f6 – g4 – e3

or the other way:

e3 – g4 – f6

If there was another coin on c2, then it would have to be
d5-f6-g4-e3-c2

A longer maze.

h3-g5-f7-d6-c4-a5-b3-d4.

Too easy?

Maybe for you, but it is excellent practice for seeing and
making knight moves. Children are often surprised by the
arrival of a knight.

White to move.

Nf8-g6 checkmate.

We know that Black’s last move was dreadful – it must have
been Kg8-h8; Kg8xf8 would have been much better, avoiding
the mate.

How do we know that was Black’s last move?

How do we know he had that choice?

(-answer)

ANSWERS

- 5th diagram:

Question 1: Yes!

Question 2: Nc6 or Qf3 (you would choose the queen, wouldn't you?)
Question 3: Yes - Nd4-f5+ (I didn't say it would be a good move).

- last diagram:

we know because the king can only have reached the h8 square from g8, where it was in check from the knight on f6; therefore it could have moved to f7 or taken the knight on f8 instead of going to its execution.