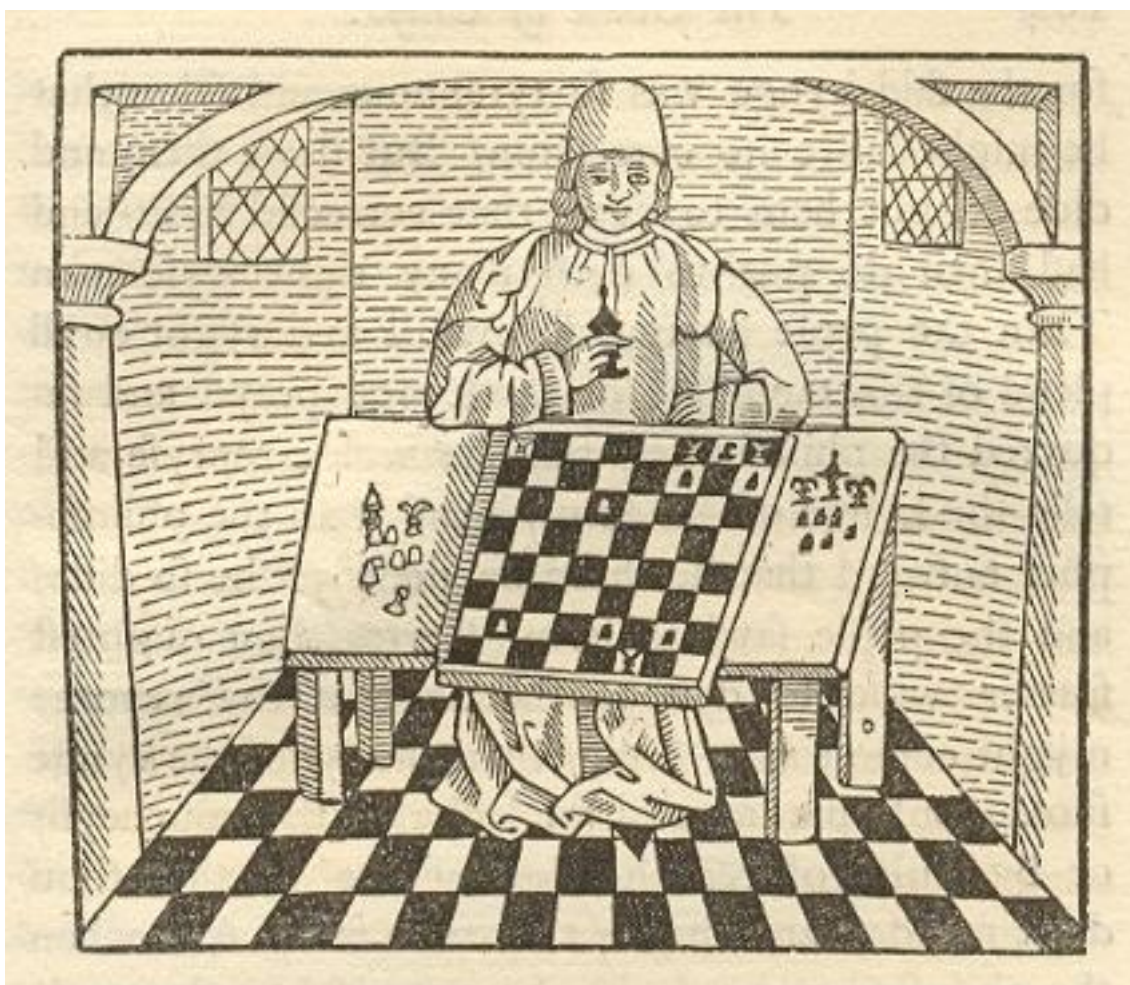


# Earliest Occurrences of Chess Terms

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(2006)



The present list comprises, for the most part, the earliest citations given in the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, although some additional headwords and other complementary material are included. Regular additions will be made, and an end-note explains how readers can help improve the list.

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## Blitz chess

Citations sought.

## **Chessdom, chessical, chessy, etc.**

See the separate [Chessy Words](#) feature article.

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## **Cook**

*OED*: 'I almost imagined the author's solution a "cook".'  
*Westminister Papers*, 1875, page 243.

*OED*: 'If there are two key-moves, a problem is cooked.' *The Field*,  
14 December 1889, page 854.

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For a detailed account of the early use of 'cook', as both a noun and a verb, see C.N. 4341. The first known occurrence of the term in a chess context was in 1851, but it is often difficult to know in which exact sense the word was being employed.

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## ***En passant***

*OED*: 'You prevent him by pushing immediately your queen's knight's pawn upon his knight, which ... obliges the adversary to take your pawn en passant.' *Practical Chess Exercises* by W.S. Kenny (London, 1818), page 106.

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## ***En prise***

*OED*: ‘When one piece can take another, that other is said to be *in Prise* of the first.’ *Chess Made Easy* (London, 1750), page ix.

*OED*: ‘[He] had the privilege of taking such of the pieces ... as might be *en prise*.’ *Kaleidoscope*, 13 March 1821, page 294.

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## **Fianchetto**

*OED*: ‘Black’s present move, which the Italians call “Il Fianchetto di Donna” ...’ *The Chess-Player’s Handbook* by H. Staunton (London, 1847), page 379.

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The *OED* incorrectly gives 1848.

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## **Grandmaster draw**

‘But the French champion enjoys the game of chess too much to indulge in the “grandmaster draw” ...’ *The Times* (London), 9 January 1950, page 8.

‘... the number of so-called “grandmaster draws” can be counted on the fingers of one hand ...’ *Prague 1946 ...* by H. Golombek (Sutton Coldfield, *circa* 1951), first page of the Introduction.

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## **Half-pin**

See C.N. 4361.

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## Helpmate

*OED*: ‘Another class of problems ... in which *both players concur* in endeavouring to effect the speediest mate ... which we term Help-mate Problems.’ *The Problem Art* by T.B. and F.F. Rowland (Kingstown, 1897), page 91.

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## Hypermodern

*OED*: ‘The Hyper-moderns are the greatest opponents of routine play.’ *Modern Ideas in Chess* by R. Réti, translated by J. Hart (London, 1923), page 122.

*OED*: ‘What is claimed as hyper-modern turns out to be ... respectably medi[a]eval.’ *BCM*, September 1923, page 338.

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The same page of the *BCM*, the item being a review by P.W. Sergeant of Réti’s *Modern Ideas in Chess*, refers to Réti discussing ‘the school of the Hyper-moderns’ and also contains the remark ‘But this is scarcely hyper-modern’.

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## Indian (openings)

*OED*: ‘Openings,..Hungarian, ... Indian, ... King’s Gambits.’ *The Hastings Chess Tournament 1895* by H.F. Cheshire (London, 1896), page 369.

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‘Indian Defence.’ *Chess Openings* by J. Mason (London, 1897), page 92. A reference to 1 e4 d6.

‘Indian Opening.’ *International Chess Magazine*, August 1891, page 237. (Heading to a game which began 1 e4 e5 2 d3.)

‘Indian Defence.’ *Chess Player’s Chronicle*, 22 October 1884, page 172. Note after 1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6: ‘An example of the rare Indian Defence, so called on account of its introduction by the celebrated Indian Chess Player, the Brahmin Moheschunder Bonnerjee, in his games against Cochrane.’

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## Indian (problems)

*OED*: ‘We now publish the names of those amateurs who have sent us the correct solution of our Indian problem.’ *Chess Player’s Chronicle*, 1846, page 96.

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## Isolani

‘White has an “isolani”.’ *My System* by A. Nimzowitsch (London, 1929), page 187.

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## Isolated pawn

*OED*: ‘An isolated pawn is one that has no comrade on the same or either adjoining file, so that he requires the support of a Piece.’ *Chess Exemplified* by C. Pearson (London, 1842), page 27.

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## J’adoube

*OED*: ‘If a player *touch* one of his adversary’s pieces, without saying “J’adoube”, he may be compelled to take it.’ *A Treatise on the Game*

*of Chess* by J.H. Sarratt (London, 1808), volume one, page 3.

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## **Knight, To**

‘White could save a Pawn by Knighting instead of Queening.’ *Chess Player’s Chronicle*, 31 March 1886, page 456.

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## **Lightning chess**

*OED*: ‘Two special lightning tournaments were held.’ *The Year-Book of Chess 1910* by E.A. Michell (London, 1910), page 143.

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‘... Bird and Burn playing lightning chess.’ *Hereford Times*, 22 June 1895, page ? See page 71 of *A Chess Omnibus*.

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## **Living chess**

*OED*: ‘So that the reader may visualize the phases through which the game has passed we will show two historical cameos of living chess.’ *Lasker’s Chess Magazine*, July 1905, page 131.

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‘Living Chess. The ancient pastime of playing chess with living representatives of the chess pieces is again becoming very popular.’ *American Chess Journal*, February 1879, page 261.

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Note: A detailed paragraph on ‘playing Chess, with living men for the pieces’ was published on page 70 of the April 1875 *City of London Chess Magazine* but did not contain the specific term ‘living chess’.

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## Nimzo-Indian

*OED*: ‘Nimzo-Indian Defence.’ *CHESS*, 14 November 1935, page 103.

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The *OED* citation was from an article by Tartakower. For the origins of the term (in German-language sources) see C.N. 3712.

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## Patzer/Potzer

*OED*: ‘Immediately, spectators inquired, “Didn’t you see that win?” “Yes”, was the impudent reply. “But, with such a *potzer*, I draw when I will, not when he wills.’ Article by I.A. Horowitz, *Chess Review*, April 1948, page 5.

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## Pin

*OED*: ‘Removing his queen to obviate the “pin”.’ *The Book of Chess* by G.H. Selkirk (London, 1868), page 72.

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‘Of course I consider that all players for whom I have made up these Chess Studies are acquainted with the ordinary chess terms, as bishop “pins” knight, and similar conventional phrases.’ *Chess Studies* by G. Walker (London, 1844), page xii.

## Seesaw

‘A pretty so-called seesaw of checks finishes the game ...’ W. Steinitz, *American Chess Magazine*, September 1897, page 251.

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## Self-mate

*OED*: ‘The self-mate, though not difficult, is very prettily conceived.’ *Chess Player’s Magazine*, 1867, page 45

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## Sitzfleisch

*OED*: D.H. Lawrence (1932)

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‘It is *Sitzfleisch* that decides a game.’ Letter from ‘Philidor Jones’, *Chess Monthly*, December 1881, page 113. See C.N. 4316.

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## Skewer

‘Mr [Edgar] Pennell’s teaching is original in the extreme. Bystanders at Blackpool [i.e. at the British Chess Federation Congress in 1937] wondered at the strange terms such as “skewer” with which the boys interlarded their conversation. Explanations revealed that it was a term coined by Mr Pennell ...’ *CHESS*, 14 January 1939, page 212.

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## Sui-mate

*OED*: ‘White sui-mates in ten moves.’ *Dubuque Chess Journal*, November 1870, page 7.

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## Tabia/Tabiya

Citations sought.

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## Woodshifter

‘The most ordinary “wood-shifter” by long study and analysis, can acquire a steady defensive style of wood-shifting ...’ *Mr Blackburne’s Games at Chess* by P. Anderson Graham (London, 1899), page 9.

Such ‘wood words’ were discussed on pages 119-120 of *Chess Facts and Fables*. Moreover, references to woodpushing exist in *Le neveu de Rameau* by Denis Diderot. See C.N. 4325.

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## World champion/Champion of the world

‘But one remains – the noblest heart –  
At him thy glove be hurled;  
Der Lasa conquered then thou art  
The Champion of the World.’

Final stanza of a poem to Paul Morphy by Edwin J. Weller, Boston, 9 November 1857 in *Chess Monthly*, December 1857, page 367.

‘Morphy is comparatively a boy, but he stands today the champion of the world.’ *American Union*, 9 October 1858, page ?.

‘... no man living can tell whether or no, these two gentlemen are not now engaged in fighting *for the Chess championship of the whole world!*’ C.H. Stanley in *Harper’s Weekly*, 9 October 1858, page ?.

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### **X-Ray attack**

‘There is another type of double attack in which the targets are threatened *in one direction*. The attacking piece threatens two units, one behind the other, on the same rank, file or diagonal. This double threat has lacked a good descriptive name. We suggest “X-Ray’ attack”.’ Article by K. Harkness on page 25 of the *Chess Review*, April 1947. See C.N. 4245.

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### **Zugzwang:**

*OED*: ‘White has struggled bravely and only loses by “Zugzwang”.’ *Lasker’s Chess Magazine*, February 1905, page 166.

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The correct date is 1905, and not 1904 as given in the 1989 edition of the *OED*.

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### **Zwischenzug:**

*OED*: ‘This masterly *Zwischenzug* is the finest move in the whole game ...’ *Keres’ Best Games of Chess 1931-1940* by F. Reinfeld (London, 1941), page 108.

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*Note:* Earlier citations (primary sources, with all requisite bibliographical details) are welcomed, as are proposals for additional entries. The e-mail address is [chessnotes@chesshistory.com](mailto:chessnotes@chesshistory.com), and the word 'chess' needs to appear in the subject-line or in the message itself. Correspondents are asked to include their name and full postal address and to specify whether they wish to be identified in connection with any contribution made.

*Acknowledgments:* Morgan Daniels (*Times*/grandmaster draw; Diderot/woodpushing), Jack O'Keefe (X-Ray attack), Joost van Winsen (Mason citation for Indian Defence, and living chess).

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Citations for various less common terms are presented in a companion article, [Unusual Chess Words](#).

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