

Chinese Chess User Guide

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Introduction

Welcome to Chinese Chess

Chinese Chess is compatible with devices that use version 3 or later of the Palm™ Operating System, including the Palm III™ and Palm V™ organizers.

This User Guide covers all platforms and rather than referring to any specific device, will simply refer to ‘your handheld computer’. Readers should note that, unless otherwise stated, the same functionality is supported by all handheld computers available at the time of writing.

About this document

The Chinese Chess User Guide explains how to use the Chinese Chess application. In so doing, the Guide assumes that the reader is familiar with the standard features of their organizer / handheld computer.

The Guide is also supplied in electronic form as a Portable Document Format (.pdf) file. Software to display .pdf files is freely available from Adobe Systems Incorporated and can be acquired from their World Wide Web site at <http://www.adobe.com/acrobat/>.

This chapter describes the main features of the Chinese Chess application and how they are used to play and display the game.

Game overview

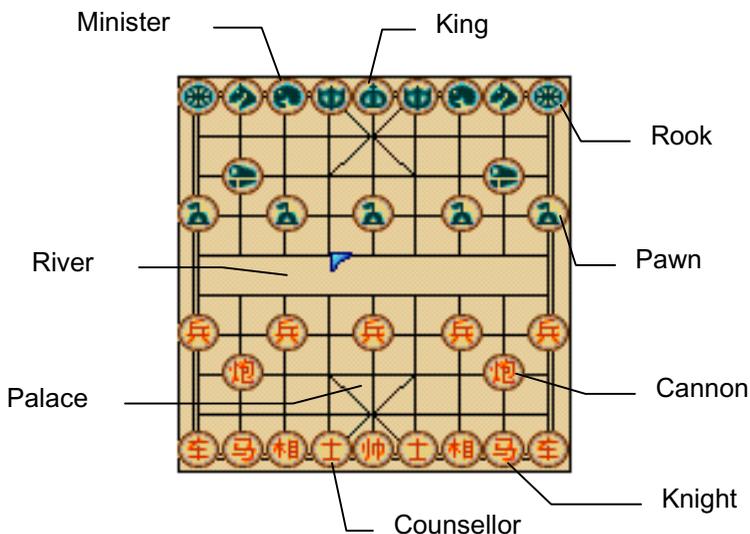
Chinese Chess differs from its Western counterpart reflecting the philosophy and history of China.

A Chinese Chess board contains nine horizontal and ten vertical lines. The pieces do not move from square to square as in Chess but from intersection to intersection.

Both sides of the board contain an Imperial Palace which consists of nine points joined by diagonal lines. Across the centre of the board is the river. The

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river represents the Yellow River that divides north and south China. There are seven different pieces rather than six found in Chess. These pieces are more restricted in their movements than Chess pieces. The pieces can be represented by Western symbols or Chinese characters as shown below.



- The King is restricted to the Imperial Palace. The King may only move a single point either horizontally or vertically in any turn. He may never move into check nor into a position where he directly faces the opposing King. The King is represented by a crown. Each side has a single King.
- The Counsellor is restricted to the Imperial Palace and may only move a single point diagonally in any turn. The Counsellor is represented by a hat. Each side starts with two Counsellors.
- The Minister may move exactly two points diagonally. The Minister may not cross the river nor jump over or through obstructing pieces. The Minister is represented by an elephant's head. Each side starts with two Ministers.
- The Knight may move one point either horizontally or vertically followed by a diagonal move to the left or right. Unlike Chess, the Knight may not jump over or through obstructing pieces. The Knight is represented by a horse's head. Each side starts with two Knights.

- The Rook moves any number of unobstructed points in either the horizontal or vertical directions. The Rook is represented by a cartwheel. Each side starts with two Rooks.
- The Cannon moves much like a Rook. It may only capture a piece by first jumping over an intervening piece of either colour. The intervening piece is called a *bridge* or *screen*. The Cannon is represented by a cannon. Each side starts with two cannons.
- The Pawn may move a single point forward. Once across the river a Pawn may move horizontally to the left or right as well as move forward. It may only move a single point in one direction on each turn. Unlike Chess, Pawns do not get promoted to other pieces if they reach the far side of the board. The Pawn is represented by a tent. Each side starts with five Pawns.

Do not worry if you cannot remember all of this information immediately. Chinese Chess provides facilities to identify piece names and their legal moves at any time.

Game objective

As in Chess, the object of the game is to capture the opposing King. A threat to capture the King is called check. The opposing King must escape check on its next move.

If it cannot, the opposition loses the game. Unlike Chess, you can win a game of Chinese Chess if the opponent has no legal move and is not in check. This is called winning by stalemate.

General tactics

The Rook is considered the most powerful piece, followed by the Cannon then the Knight.

The Cannon decreases in power as pieces are captured since it requires other pieces on the board to use as a screen.

The Knight increases in power since its mobility increases when there are more free points to move between. Remember that unlike Chess, a Knight in Chinese Chess may not move through occupied points.

Ministers and Counsellors are limited in power as they are restricted to one side of the board, with Counsellors being restricted to the Imperial Palace. They should be used as defensive cover for the King.

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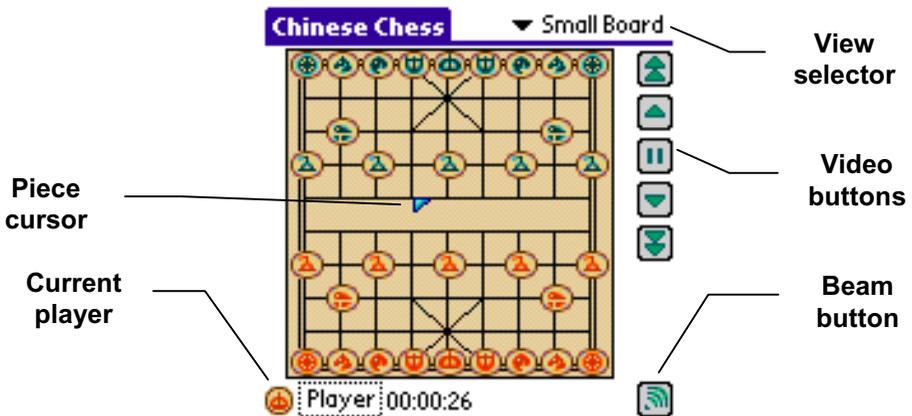
Pawns are the least powerful pieces, however they become more powerful once they cross the river as their mobility increases. Once across the river they can move horizontally as well as forwards hence the number of points on the board they can attack increases. Since Pawns are not promoted they become less powerful as they advance further.

Using Chinese Chess

Running Chinese Chess

When you first run Chinese Chess, application information is briefly displayed and a new game is started. The game starts with you as the "Player" using the black pieces against a relatively unskilled computer opponent playing the white pieces. Black is the 1st to move.

The Chinese Chess Board



Chinese Chess offers a variety of views of the board and by default the "Medium board" is presented. The various views make use of a variety of standard components. These are described below.

Selecting views

Tap the View selector to present a popup list from which you can select any of the available views of the board. Note that you can also select any view from the **Show** menu.

You can also switch between the Western and Chinese pieces by selecting the **Preferences** dialog from the **Options** menu.

The Current player

This shows the name of the player whose turn it is to move. A clock showing the playing time is also displayed. Some views show both players and in these cases, in addition to the clock being updated, the current player is indicated by an arrow.

Tapping the player name presents the **Player Details** dialog which allows you to change the name of the player, whether they are a human or computer player and for computer players, the skill level.

Chinese Chess maintains a list of available players. Facilities to create, amend or delete players are described later in this document.

Making moves

The Piece cursor indicates the currently selected piece. Tap a piece to select it. To move the selected piece, you can either tap the destination or drag the piece to the desired square.

When you tap a destination square or a computer player makes a move, the piece is animated and moves to the new location. You can control the speed of animation by selecting the **Preferences** dialog from the **Options** menu.

If you try to make an illegal move, Chinese Chess will display an appropriate error message.

Note that Chinese Chess also supports selecting and moving pieces using a keyboard. Use the cursor keys to move the cursor and the Enter or Space keys to select or place a piece. You can also use the Esc key to return a piece to its original square.

Chinese Chess offers a range of features that can help with making moves:

- If you want to be reminded of the last move made in the game, select the **Show Last Move** option from the **Move** menu.

- If you want to see which of the current players pieces are threatened (could be taken) by their opponent, select the **Threatened Pieces** option from the **Move** menu.
- If you want to see the legal moves that are available for the currently selected piece, select the **Legal Moves** item from the **Move** menu.
- If you are unsure about the type of the current piece, select the **Piece Name** item from the **Options** menu.
- If you would like a hint as to the best move to play, select the **Hint** item from the **Move** menu.
- If you are playing a computer opponent and would like to force them to make a move before they have completed examining all the possibilities, select the **Move now** item from the **Move** menu.

Reviewing a game

The Video buttons allow you to review the current game. Tap the desired button to undo or redo a single move or to undo or redo a series of moves. Note that when a series of moves is being undone or replayed, you can tap the Stop button to cancel the operation.

You can also undo and redo a single move by selecting the appropriate item from the **Move** menu which additionally provides options to undo or redo all moves.

Note that when you review a game by undoing or redoing moves, a computer player will be paused, so that you can examine the board position. To reactivate the computer player and continue playing, simply tap the board.

Beaming

You can share games with or play against other people by beaming games between infrared enabled PalmOS devices running the Chinese Chess application.

Chinese Chess maintains a list of games stored on your device. Facilities to create, amend or delete games are described later in this document.

To beam the current game, simply tap the Beam button or select the Beam game option from the **Game** menu.

When you elect to receive a beamed game, if the received game matches one already stored on your device *and* offers a valid next move from an opponent,

the move is made and the new game state presented. Otherwise, the received game is added as a new entry to the list of games available.

Move List

The Game History view also presents the Move List – a scrollable list of the moves made in the current game. Any move made in the game of Chinese Chess can be represented by one of several different move notations. Chinese Chess supports the four most common notations:

- **Co-ordinate:** Commonly called the computer format, this notation is the default notation displayed by Chinese Chess.
- **Algebraic:** Typically used in Chinese Chess books and by club players.
- **Long algebraic:** This notation expands on the algebraic notation to explicitly describe both the start and destination squares of a move.
- **International:** This notation is used when describing games between players where language barriers preclude the use of the alphabetic characters ‘a’ to ‘h’.

You can switch between notations by selecting the **Preferences** dialog from the **Options** menu.

Managing Players

Chinese Chess maintains a list of players involved in any of the games stored on your device. You can add new players, delete players or amend their details by selecting the **Players** item from the **Game** menu. The list of players will then be presented.

- To create a new player, tap the **New** button. The player details dialog will then be presented with default values. If you confirm the dialog, the new player will be added to the list.
- To amend the details of an existing player, highlight the player in the list and tap the **Details** button to present the player details dialog. When you confirm the dialog, any changes will be applied.
- To delete a player, highlight the player in the list and tap the **Delete** button.

Note that when you receive a beamed game that involves a player who is not already recorded on the receiving device, the player will automatically be added to the list of players.

Managing games

Chinese Chess allows you to store multiple games on your device. When you launch Chinese Chess, the most recent game is presented as the current game.

You can create new games, delete games or amend their details by picking the **Select** item from the **Game** menu. The list of games will then be presented.

- To make any game in the list the current game, simply highlight the desired game and tap the **Done** button.
- To create a new game, highlight a game in the list on which you would like to base the new game and tap the **Copy** button. The game details dialog will then be presented. Amend the game details as desired and confirm the dialog to add the game to the list. You can initialise or manually set up a board position for the newly created game using the **New Game** or **Game Setup** functions described below.
- To amend the details of an existing game, highlight the game in the list and tap the **Details** button to present the game details dialog. When you confirm the dialog, any changes will be applied.
- To delete a game, highlight the game in the list and tap the **Delete** button.

Note that when you receive a beamed game that does not match any game already recorded on the receiving device, the game will automatically be added to the list.

At any time, you can reset the current game to its initial position by selecting **New Game** from the **Game** menu. Note that when you do this the move list is cleared so that it is no longer possible to redo moves that may have previously been made. If you want to retain the move list, use the **Undo all** function described above.

You can also edit the game position directly by selecting the **Game Setup** view. In this view, you can:

- Change the position of any piece by dragging it to a new location.
- Remove a piece by dragging off the board to the left or right.
- Add a new piece by dragging one of the piece types shown to the left or right of the board to the desired location.

Using Chinese Chess

- Set whose turn it is to move next from the board position you have defined.
- Select the players for this game.

If you confirm the Game Setup by tapping the **OK** button, any changes will be applied to the current game and any move list information will be cleared. To return to the current game, preserving the original position and any move list, tap the **Cancel** button.