

Rules for Bughouse Chess

Bughouse chess, originally known as: "Putback Chess" is a:

...crazy game [in which] no men are ever taken off the board. When a man is "captured" the player making the capture replaces the enemy man on a vacant square. However, captured Pawns must not be placed on the opponent's first rank, and a captured Bishop must be placed on a square of the same color as the Bishop's original square. The starting position and the moves of the men are the same as in regular chess. The player's King must be out of check on completion of the player's move. Pawns are promoted to Queens only. A move with capture is completed only when the captured man has been placed on another square. Obviously, the only way to win is by checkmate. [Harkness, Kenneth, *Official Chess Handbook*, 1971, pp.179-80.]

Since 1971 "Putback chess" has morphed significantly as new rules and regulations have been adapted and adopted. Extremely popular among many younger players who view it with excitement, novelty, and imagination, the current version has emerged to be called Bughouse Chess (The significance of the new name will become more meaningful once you have played a game or two.) and is one of the few variations of chess that permit partner play. Most commonly played under a G/5 time limit, Bughouse chess features two boards and clocks placed side by side, with two man teams paired against each other. The following information were taken from the website: <http://About.Com:chess>

Bughouse is quite possibly the most popular chess variant in the world. You'll see it being played -- especially by children -- in skittles rooms and side events at any major tournament. The rules of bughouse are quite simple, but the strategies and tactics are perhaps even more complex than in standard chess.

Bughouse is a game played by two teams, usually consisting of two players each. On each team, one player will play White, while the other plays Black on a board next to them, across from their opponents. Each individual game requires its own clock. Bughouse is traditionally played with blitz time controls, with each player having five minutes or less to make their moves.

The game begins when the clocks are started and each team's "White" player makes their first move. After this, the games continue as normal chess games, with the following major exceptions:

1. When a player captures a piece, he must pass it to his partner. For example: if a team's White player captures his opponent's rook (a black piece), he must pass it to his partner, who is playing Black. If a pawn promotes and is then captured, it reverts back to being a pawn when it is passed.
2. On each player's turn, he may choose to either make a regular chess move on the board, **or** place one of the pieces his partner has passed to him on the board. There are no restrictions on where pieces may be placed, with the exception that pawns cannot be placed on the first or eighth ranks.
3. The game ends when **any** player is checkmated or runs out of time on either board. That player's team loses the game. Keep in mind that a player is not checkmated if he has the potential to block a check by placing a piece there, even if he doesn't have a piece "in hand" yet; the possibility of his partner passing something to him is enough to keep the game going.

These rules make bughouse a fast and furious game filled with exciting combinations and amazing mates. A player who has several pieces in hand can quickly turn a game around, or checkmate a seemingly "safe" king. While you'll never get to place a piece on the board in the middle of a real chess game, the patterns and tactics that arise in bughouse can help develop your chess vision and creativity.

Bughouse strategy is quite complex, but there are a few key points to remember:

- Material values are much closer between the various pieces in bughouse than in chess. Queens are still the most valuable pieces, but since every piece can be dropped just about anywhere on the board at any time, everything is dangerous! One popular "point" system for bughouse rates a pawn as 1 point, knights, bishops and rooks as 2, and a queen as 4.
- Keeping a secure king is critical, as holes and unprotected squares around the king can quickly become occupied by enemy pieces. Once an opponent is placing pieces with check (especially knights), it can become impossible to use your own pieces in hand, leaving you virtually helpless to stop the onslaught.
- Communication is key! Teammates are allowed and encouraged to talk strategy during the game. This can help players understand whether or not they should make trades, or if they should be willing to sacrifice material to get a certain critical piece for their partner.
- Sometimes the best move in bughouse is no move at all. With an advantage on the clocks, a team may want to stall on one board in order to force their opponents to make a move on the other. The potential of the stall forces fast action during the game, as both sides struggle to maintain an advantage on the board and on the clock.