What do chess players and musicians have in common? Notation! In music, notes and special symbols are used to describe sounds - in chess, a move. If there was no way to write a game down in symbols that indicate every move, we would not be able to replay the brilliant games of the past; they would have been long forgotten.

Most of you probably already know how chess notation works and how to ‘read’ a chess game. This article is for those who are not yet ‘fluent’ in this chess-specific language.

Look at the empty board on the right. You can see that there are letters from ‘A’ to ‘H’ below it and numbers from ‘1’ to ‘8’ on its side.

These are coordinates! They work the same way as the letters and numbers of squares on a map. The placement of pieces on the board can always be described by these numbers and letters. When the letter and the number are combined, each square acquires an unique ‘name’. The next diagram displays these ‘names’ for half of the board. Can you find the names of the unmarked squares by yourself? Let’s try with ‘g6’. Can you find it?

The diagram on the right shows how to do it – first find the letter ‘g’, then find the number ‘6’; the ‘g6’ square is where the lines meet!

Let’s assume there is a piece standing on the board, how to find its coordinates?

To do that, extend, in your mind, the line going from this piece to the letter and then along to the side for the number. For example, in the diagram given on the right, the black rook stands on ‘b8’. Can you find by yourself where all the other pieces and pawns stand?

There are boards with no letters and numbers on them. Before you get ‘fluent’, better use a board that has letters and numbers on the edges, like those shown in the last issue.

THE ANSWER.

White: king on g1, rook on e1, pawns on a4, c2, d6, f2, g2, h2.
Black: king on g6, rook on b8, pawns on a5, c3, f7, g7, h6.
When you know the coordinates, writing down a chess game becomes an easy task! But let’s start with a single move. There are two types of chess notation: ‘long’ and ‘short’. It is better to use the ‘long’ form; it shows both the ‘from’ square and the ‘to’ square, while the ‘short’ one gives only the square where the piece ends up.

Look at the knight on the right. There is a route of three moves which we will write down together. First, you indicate the piece that is moving. All the pieces have their own ‘short’ name (which is usually the first letter of the name of the piece). Knight is ‘N’ (because the king already ‘reserved’ ‘K’ for himself!).

So, first you write N. Then you should indicate where the knight stands before making the move. It stands on c6. So let’s write it down:

**Nc6**

Then let’s see where it moves. To e5. You put the symbol ‘-’ between the two squares.

**Nc6-e5**

Here it is! If you send this position to somebody and write Nc6-e5, the recipient will understand the move!

In ‘short’, then this move would be written as just ‘Ne5’.

Why not use ‘short’ and save time? Because ‘long’ helps to avoid making mistakes and playing bad moves.

‘Long’ notation helps you to think about the move as a whole, not just half of it.

**Question 1:** Can you write down all the moves of the knight’s route on the diagram?

**Question 2:** Can you write down all the moves of the queen’s route on the diagram on the right?

**ANSWER 1**

Nc6-e5  
Ne5-f7  
Nf7-h6  

**ANSWER 2**

Qb7-h7  
Qh7-e4  
Qe4-a4  
Qa4-d1  

**THE SHORT NAMES OF PIECES**

King = K  
Queen = Q  
Rook = R  
Bishop = B  
Knight = N

Pawns are not indicated by a letter

**OTHER SYMBOLS**

Capture = x  
Check = +  
Checkmate #  
Short castle = 0-0  
Long castle = 0-0-0
There are a few other things you need to know, in addition to what you learned above, before writing down an actual game.

The pawns are not indicated by a letter. So, if you want to write down a pawn move, for example the pawn moving forward in the position on the right, you just write e5-e6.

If the piece (or pawn) captures something, then ‘-’ in between the ‘from’ and ‘to’ squares changes to ‘x’. If the king takes the bishop here, you write Kd5xd6. Check is indicated by a ‘+’ after the ‘to’ square. You can find the list of special symbols on page 3.

In a real game, each move also has a number. In the diagram on the right, it is move number 47 now and White to play. Let’s see what happened. On this move, White took the bishop with his pawn on e5. The move should be written as

47. e5xd6
Black answered by moving his king to a4.

47. ... Kb3-a4
We put three dots to show that it is a move by Black. We have done that because we put a comment between White’s 47th move and Black’s 47th move. You can see over on the right how it looks without the comments.

Then White pushed the pawn.

48. d6-d7
Black moved the king to a5.

48. ... Ka4-a5
Now, a move that is more complicated to write – White promoted the pawn to a queen, giving check.

49. d7-d8Q+
After the ‘to’ square, the symbol ‘Q’ indicates that a queen appears on the board in place of the pawn; the symbol ‘+’ at the end of the move shows that it is a check.

Black resigned. So the result is ‘1-0’ and usually that is written after the last move.

In short notation this sequence of moves would be written as:

47. exd6 Kb3-a4
48. d6-d7 Ka4-a5
49. d7-d8Q+
1-0

‘Short’ notation lacks most of the symbols and is used by many players because it is quicker to write in such a way. But we would advise you to use the ‘long’ notation, just like most World Champions – this way you will observe the board better and it will prevent some of the mistakes that can occur.

Possible results:

1-0 White won
0-1 Black won
½-½ drawn game
0-0 both players lose – this is very rare but can happen because of rule-breaking.