

What is Chesscalation?

Chesscalation is a two player strategy game based off of Chess and Shogi. It's designed to avoid analysis paralysis and avalanching by favoring the defender and easing the pressure of each move - all while still keeping the strategic depth of Chess. It also has a bunch of fun unique pieces.

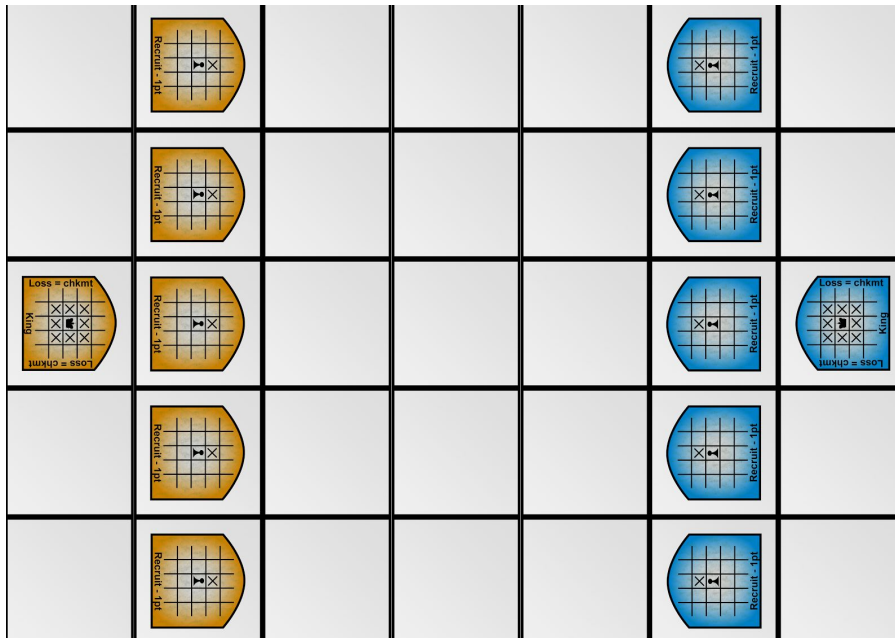
Goal

Like Chess, the goal of Chesscalation is capture the opponent's King or reduce the opponent to nothing but the king. Each player starts with a rather weak set of pieces, but upgrade and build upon those pieces as the game continues.

Setup

Separate the orange pieces from the blue pieces and assign a color to each player. Set up the board like so:

Place the King in the center of the first row for each player. The, fill the second row with Recruits.



Keep the rest of the pieces nearby each player. If you are still getting used to the game, I recommend arranging the extra pieces in order of points.

Playing the Game

Randomly decide which player will go first.

During their turn, a player may either 1. Move a piece 2. Upgrade a piece, or 3. Place a new piece. Players may not upgrade a piece or place a new piece into a position that would cause check. Only by moving pieces may a player threaten their opponent's King.

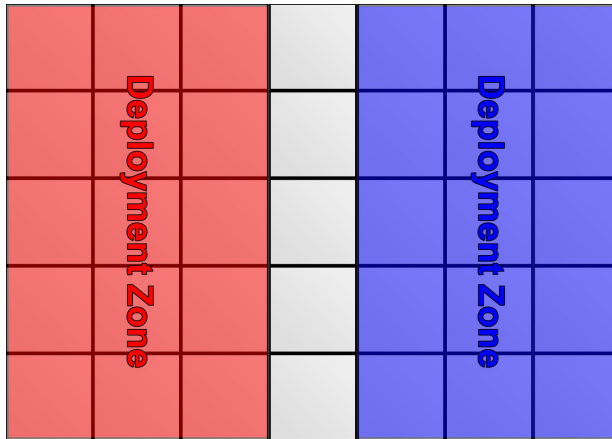
1. Moving a Piece

Players may use their turn to move a piece. Each piece illustrates the way they can move.

| | |
|---|--|
| X | Piece may move directly to this square. If there is an enemy in the square it is removed. The spaces are usually adjacent, but not necessarily so. For example, this is how the Knight moves. |
| → | Piece may move in a straight line, crossing any number of empty squares. If there is an enemy piece in the way, it may be captured it and move to that square. For example, this is how a Rook or Bishop move in normal chess. |
| * | Piece may remove an enemy piece in this space WITHOUT moving, this is to represent ranged combat. |
| O | Pieces may move directly to this square but may NOT capture enemy pieces in that square. If an enemy pieces occupies that space, the piece may not move there. |

2. Place a Piece.

Players may place a new piece onto the board so long as three conditions are met. First, the new piece is of a GREATER point value than all of other pieces under the player's control. Second, the new piece does NOT threaten the opponent's King. Third, the new piece is placed in the player's deployment zone (The first three rows closest to the player).



3. Upgrading a Piece

Any piece may be replaced with any other piece of a greater point value. This does NOT conflict with the previous rule. When upgrading a piece, only that single piece's score is considered. For example if the player wished to upgrade a Recruit (1 point) to a Rook (7 points), it would not matter if they already have a Castle (9 points).

Return the upgraded piece to the player's pool. That piece may be placed or upgraded to later on. For example, if an Archer is upgraded to a Rook, that same Archer may be placed or upgraded to later in the game.

The Rule of Escalation

As the game progresses, the mean value of each player's pieces inevitably goes up. This is not strictly a good thing. Having higher valued pieces in play necessarily limits one's options.

Placing the Queen on the first turn may seem like a strong and obvious strategy. However, while the queen is out, the player will not be able to place ANY new pieces. Their only option will be to upgrade Recruits to better pieces. Placing a Queen, or any high point value piece, is not a decision that should be taken lightly.

It is not possible to regain recruits. Losing a Recruit may not seem like a terrible loss - like losing a pawn in Chess - but that is not so. The value of Recruits lays in their potential to become any other piece. This is especially useful when a player has a higher value piece out (like a Castle or Queen) and needs more pieces.

Defensive Placement

Being able to place pieces on one's turn offers a very effective way of getting out of check. When all seems lost, a player can always throw a new piece in the way of the threat to the King. Often, this isn't as wasteful as it sounds, since the King can protect the spaces directly around itself. In this way, Chesscalation strongly favors the defender.

Alternate rules

Through the course of developing Chesscalation, I have tried several variants of the game. Here are a couple of alternative designs for Chesscalation that you might like.

Ghost Chess: pieces that are captured are not removed; they go back into the player's reserve. However, losing the Queen counts as checkmate. Players may not place or upgrade pieces that would threaten the Queen - just like the King.

Race to One Hundred: again, pieces that are captured are not removed. The goal of the game is to capture 100 points worth of their opponent's pieces without losing their King.