

Nomic Chess Starting Ruleset

The Metagaming Committee of STEPHEN *

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Abstract

This is the Starting Ruleset for the game of Nomic Chess. As Nomic Chess is a game that many people may enjoy even if they are not very familiar with STEPHEN or nomics in general, there is also a brief introduction.

1 Introductory Note Primarily Intended for Those with Little Nomic Experience

Nomic Chess is a game where the players write and vote on new rules and rule changes. As such, the rules you see below may bear little resemblance to the rules in effect towards the end of the game, but in practice, many will probably remain the same.

It will probably seem like some rules are convoluted for no reason, and some are repetitive, stating extremely obvious or redundant things. Actually, both of these things are intentional.

The first is mostly a problem with immutable rules, which by and large are designed to keep voting stable and streamlined, and don't have a lot to do with the flow of the game itself. These rules have been very carefully worded to prevent trolling and rules-lawyering (both of which are encouraged!) from disrupting the essential purpose of Nomic.

The latter is essentially a protection mechanism against sweeping reform. While change is at the heart of Nomic, we want to provide a somewhat

*Based on the work of Eric Stucky

structured environment in which the largest possible number of players can gain some intuition on the mechanic. In spreading out the functions of the rules so thin, it makes it very difficult for a single well-placed rule-change to destroy that structure.

In practice, the rules you write will probably be shorter and less exact than most of the Immutables, but with more substance than some of the Mutables.

We prefer you read the entire ruleset before playing, but the most essential initial rules are listed below.

- For the chess, see ??????????????????
- For the nomic, see ??????????????????
- For the general gameplay, see ????????????
- For rules conflicts, see ???????

2 The Starting Ruleset

2.1 Immutable Rules

100. A player always has the option to forfeit the game rather than continue to play or incur a game penalty. No penalty worse than losing, in the judgment of the player to incur it, may be imposed. When a player forfeits or otherwise loses, the Referees determine what happens to their armies.

These persons and only these persons shall be Referees: Daniel Houck, Josh Oratz, Eric Stucky, and Helen Woodward. Referees are intended to facilitate gameplay. If at any time any of these persons is unavailable, they are not considered a Referee until such time as they become available.

101. All players must always abide by all the rules then in effect, in the form in which they are then in effect. These are known collectively as the ruleset.

The ruleset may also contain text delimited by double square brackets. For the purposes of this rule, these texts are not “in effect”.

Although “he or she” or “they” are the preferred pronouns for a rule to refer to a player, gender-neutral pronouns, “you”, or “I” may be used for this purpose as well.

102. Initially rules with numbers less than 199 are immutable, and the others are mutable.

103. A rule-change is a piece of text handwritten by its author to fit entirely on a 5” × 3” index card, and describes the enactment, repeal, or amendment of a mutable rule

Throughout the ruleset, if not otherwise specified, a rule means a mutable rule.

[[**Clarification:** The most significant implication of this is that a rule-change may not alter multiple rules.]]

104. All rule-changes proposed in the proper way shall be voted on. They will be adopted if and only if they receive the required number of votes.

Every rule-change which is adopted shall be written by the Referees on the whiteboard as soon as reasonable, and if a rule is amended or repealed, this shall be reflected on the whiteboard.

Each adopted rule-change describing the enactment of a rule shall be given an ordinal number for reference, which must be greater than the number of every other adopted rule. If this number is not provided by the author, it shall be provided by the Referees. If the rule-change creates a rule, that rule is given the number of the rule-change.

105. The wording of an adopted rule-change on its index card is final; if there is a discrepancy between the voted-on changes and the rules on the board, the voted-on changes take precedence.

106. No rule-change may take effect earlier than the moment of the completion of the vote that adopted it, even if its wording explicitly states otherwise. No rule-change may have retroactive application.

107. In a conflict between a mutable and an immutable rule, the immutable rule takes precedence and the conflicting clauses of the mutable rule shall be entirely void.

108. The voting period of a rule-change is the period starting at the time it is proposed and ending after it has been voted on. Debate, argumentation, collaboration, or word changes in general on a rule-change during its voting period shall only be allowed if it is intended solely to fix grammar, spelling, or punctuation.
109. If exactly one player is living, they are the winner. Once one player is the winner, no more game actions may take place. The state of affairs that constitutes winning may not be altered from the above to any other state of affairs. The rules for determining the undead or living status of a player may be changed.
110. There must always be at least one mutable rule. The adoption of rule-changes must never become completely impermissible.
111. Rule-changes that amend or repeal their own authority are permissible. No rule-change or type of move is impermissible solely on account of the self-reference or self-application of a rule.
112. If players disagree about the legality of a move or the interpretation or application of a rule, any player may invoke Judgment. Disagreement for the purposes of this rule may be created by the insistence of any number of players; these are called partisan. (If any Referee is a player, they are partisan in all Judgments.)

Continuation of play while a player invokes Judgment is left to the discretion of the Referees. If they request that play stop, all actions taken (other than those of the Referees relevant to their role as Referee) are null and void until the Referees declare otherwise.

A Referee then gives an oral account of his/her resolution called a Judgment, which has the force of an immutable rule. Any non-partisan player may then call for a vote. If all non-partisan players vote in favor, the Judgment is overruled. In this case, a different Referee then makes a Judgment.

All decisions by Referees shall be in accordance with all the rules then in effect; but when the rules are silent, inconsistent, or unclear on the point at issue, then they shall consider game-custom, the spirit of the game, and school custom before applying other standards.

113. At any time, a Referee may propose a change to the immutable rules, which acts as a rule-change for all other purposes. The immutable rules may not be altered by any other mechanism. This rule takes precedence over every other rule.

2.2 Mutable Rules

200. If a phrase is at any location underlined in the ruleset, it is a Game Defined Term, and the text surrounding it serves as an explicit or implicit definition. In a conflict of meaning or semantics between a Game Defined Term and its ordinary usage, the explicit or implicit definition given by the ruleset takes precedence.

Any phrase which is not a Game Defined Term should generally be interpreted in its ordinary definition, with preference given to its game custom, school custom, legal, or academic connotations, in that order, if applicable.

201. At all times, the Referees shall maintain an Order, which is an ordered list consisting of all armies currently in play. This list may not be altered.

[[Clarification: According to ??, players may come to be playing different armies than the ones they started with. The Order refers only to the armies, not the players themselves.]]

202. All players begin with a half chessboard (4 rows by 8 columns) and they initially control a standard half-set of FIDE chess pieces placed upon it in the standard initial array.

203. A player with at least one army is living; a player without any armies is undead and the most recent time a player became undead is called that player's time of infection. An undead player may continue to propose rule-changes during their turn.

204. The armies shall alternate turns according to the Order. After the last army in the Order takes its turn, undead players may propose rule-changes in chronological order by their time of infection. After all undead players have done so, the first army in the Order takes its turn.

205. One turn consists of three parts taken by the current army's controller in this order: (1) moving the current army, (2) taking control of any other armies if that army's king has been checkmated, and (3) proposing one rule-change and having it voted on. Players must do the first part (subject to ??), but may elect not to take either or both of the other two.
206. A player has five minutes to perform the first part of any turn for any army he controls, and five minutes to perform the third part. If either of these time limits are exceeded, their turn immediately ends.
207. A rule-change is adopted if over half its votes are in favor; otherwise, it is defeated.
208. Each player always has exactly one vote.
209. An adopted rule-change takes full effect at the end of its voting period.
210. When a proposed rule-change is defeated, its author must immediately demote one of their non-king pieces. A demoted queen is a rook, a demoted rook is a bishop, a demoted bishop is a knight, a demoted knight is a pawn, a demoted pawn is removed from the board.
211. If two or more mutable rules conflict with one another, or if two or more immutable rules conflict with one another, then the rule with the lowest ordinal number takes precedence.
- If at least one of the rules in conflict explicitly says of itself that it defers to another rule (or type of rule) or takes precedence over another rule (or type of rule), then such provisions shall supersede the numerical method for determining precedence.
- If two or more rules claim to take precedence over one another or to defer to one another, then the numerical method again governs.
212. Except as otherwise provided in these rules, the official FIDE Laws of Chess apply.
213. Article IV Sections 1-5 and Articles V through XIV of the FIDE Laws of Chess do not apply in this game; all other clauses do.
- [[**Clarification:** Okay, in brief, this means you play chess like usual. En passant is legal, castling on either side is legal. If you let go of

a piece on a square, it goes there, assuming it can. Drawing is not currently a thing. Notable changes (for tournament players) are that we have no clocks, no mandatory notation, and no touch-move. If you don't know what these are...well, we don't have them, so you don't have to worry about it ☺]]

214. Whenever you intend to move a piece, you must push two half-boards together, then make any legal move.

[[**Clarification:** You get to choose which half-boards you use for this, no restrictions at all, but even if your move takes place entirely on one half-board, you must still push two half-boards together.]]

215. An army makes one move for each half-board on which it has pieces at the start of the turn with the following exception: When you push two half-boards together, and you already have pieces on both half-boards, a single legal move applies to all involved half-boards.

[[**Clarification:** This rule means that you can't move the same piece twice in one turn, and you can't move one piece onto a board and another piece off of the same board.]]

216. When a player's army checkmates a King, that King's army becomes theirs, and that army's turn will now be played by them. Armies controlled by the same player don't give check or checkmate to each others' kings.

If two or more players' armies together checkmate a King, then the player with the most pieces involved in the checkmate gains control of that King's army. If there is a tie for the most pieces, then the Referee decides who gains control of the army.

[[**Clarification:** An army may change hands several times. You may gain some other army, lose your original army, and remain living.]]

217. If, when you push two boards together, an enemy King is in check, this is immediately checkmate for that army, and you still get to make your move. If, when you push two boards together, your own King is in check, you must defend it: if you are checkmated, you lose that army!