

Chess in the Light of the Jurist		
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Rulings	Every human action (including playing chess) falls under one of five categories: wājib, mandūb, mubāh, makrūh, and ḥarām	
Origin of chess	<p>According to Western historical sources, the origins of chess date to around 500 CE in India</p> <p>According to Ibn Khallikān, historian and biographer, chess was invented by the Indian philosopher Sissah, for the Indian ruler Shihram</p>	
Chess and Arabs	<p>The Arabs called chess shātranj, a word derived from Sanskrit</p> <p>“Checkmate” is derived from the Arabic “shāh māt,” meaning, “The king is dead”</p> <p>Arab chess came about with the Muslim invasion of Persia in 20 AH</p> <p>It was the Arab form of chess that entered into Europe through Andalusian Spain, Muslim Sicily, and Turkey</p>	
European chess	The Europeans gave the queen much more power, enabling her to move like a rook and a bishop	
Rulings on chess	<p>All jurists agreed that if any gambling was involved then it is prohibited</p> <p>Scholars reached three different rulings concerning chess that is played devoid of gambling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Playing chess is prohibited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majority opinion of the Ḥanbalī scholars and the stronger opinion among the Ḥanafī scholars <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “As for chess, its ruling is similar to the prohibition of games of dice; however, [the ruling against] games of dice is stronger given the explicit prophetic text prohibiting them” - Ḥanafī scholars termed the ruling of playing chess karāhiyyah taḥrīmiyyah: if the game was free of gambling, not habitual, and did not preoccupy its players from any obligation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Otherwise it was deemed prohibited - “There is no disagreement among Mālik and his companions that habitual playing is a character flaw” 	
Ibn Qudāmah	<p>لَا خَلَافَ بَيْنَ مَالِكٍ وَأَصْحَابِهِ أَنَّ الْإِذْمَانَ عَلَى الْلَّعْبِ بِهَا جُرْحَةٌ وَقَدْ قِيلَ الْإِذْمَانُ أَنْ يَلْعَبَ بِهَا فِي</p>	
Al-Dasūqī al-Mālikī		

<p>Al-Nawawī</p>	<p>السنة أكثر من مرأة</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Playing chess is discouraged but not prohibited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Position of the school of Imam al-Shāfi‘ī <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Our school’s opinion is that [playing chess] is discouraged but not prohibited” <p>وأما الشطرنج فمذهبنا أنه مكره ليس بحرام وهو مروي عن جماعة من التابعين</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Playing chess permissible (mubāh) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Among this group are Imam al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 105 AH), Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (d. 95 AH), Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110 AH), Abū Yūsuf al-Hanafī, Imam al-Ghazālī <p>ابن عبد البر : ومن رويت الرخصة عنه في اللعب بالشطرنج، ما لم يكن قماراً: سعيد بن المسيب، وسعيد بن حبيب، ومحمد بن سيرين، ومحمد بن المنكير، وعروة بن الزبير، وابنة هشام، وسليمان بن يسار، وأبو وائل، والشعبي، والحسن البصري، وعلي بن الحسين بن علي، وجعفر بن محمد، وأبي شهاب، وربيعة، وعاء</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All of them placed the caveats that it not be habitual nor lead to neglecting one’s duties <p>الغزالى : وللعبة بالشطرنج ليس بحرام لكن المواظبة عليها قد تخرم المروءة في حق بعض الناس</p> <p>فيقدح</p>
<p>Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr al-Mālikī</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The final say in the matter in Mālik’s school, as well as the majority of jurists, is that as long as one is not gambling and plays the game in privacy, once in a month or a year, then it is not prohibited or even discouraged” <p>وتحصيل مذهب مالك وجمهور الفقهاء في الشطرنج: أن من لم يقامر بها، ولعب مع أهله في بيته مستترًا به، مرأة في الشهر أو العام، لا يطلع عليه، ولا يعلم به: أنه معف عنه، غير محرم عليه ولا مكره له</p>
<p>Principle</p>	<p>“That in which difference of opinion exists is not to be condemned”</p> <p>لا ينكر المخالف فيه</p>
<p>Precedent</p>	<p>Ibn Hajar: “Nothing whatsoever from the Prophet ﷺ concerning chess has been established”</p> <p>The strongest proofs for the prohibition of playing chess come from analogical reasoning (qiyās) on the explicit prohibition of backgammon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scholars have countered that there is a disparity (fāriq) in that backgammon is a game of chance that very often involved gambling
<p>Recreation</p>	<p>Hadīth: “Most of humanity cheat themselves of two precious things: shīhah and farāgh (time one is free of preoccupation)”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most of us fill that time with trivial pursuits, such as watching television, listening to music, playing games, and engaging in empty chatter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “By time, surely humanity is in loss except those who believe and do good works” <p>Abū al-Dardā’ RA said, “I sometimes use purposeless things to reinvigorate myself for purposeful things”</p>

	<p>إني لأشجع نفسي بشيء من اللهو لأنقوني بذلك فيما بعد على الحق</p> <p>We all need downtime to restore ourselves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The tragedy occurs when those activities become the purpose of our lives, and the true purpose of life is entirely missed <p>“Life is long enough, and a sufficiently generous amount has been given to us for the highest achievements if it were all well invested”</p> <p>If playing chess more than once concerned the scholars of Islam, what would they say today about our habits of watching movies and playing video games, about our endless conversations on cell phones, or about the hours that we spend surfing the net</p>
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