

15 PLAYFUL FACTS

ABOUT CHESS



1 Chess **developed** more than a thousand years ago—so long ago that we don't know if it began in India or Persia.

2 An Icelandic story tells of the Danish king **Knut the Great** playing chess in 1027.

3 Chess may be based on the Indian game *Chaturanga*, which means **"having four limbs"**—a likely reference to India's army, which had four branches: soldiers, horsemen, chariots, and elephants.

4 Persians changed the name to *Chatrang* and used it in **war games**.



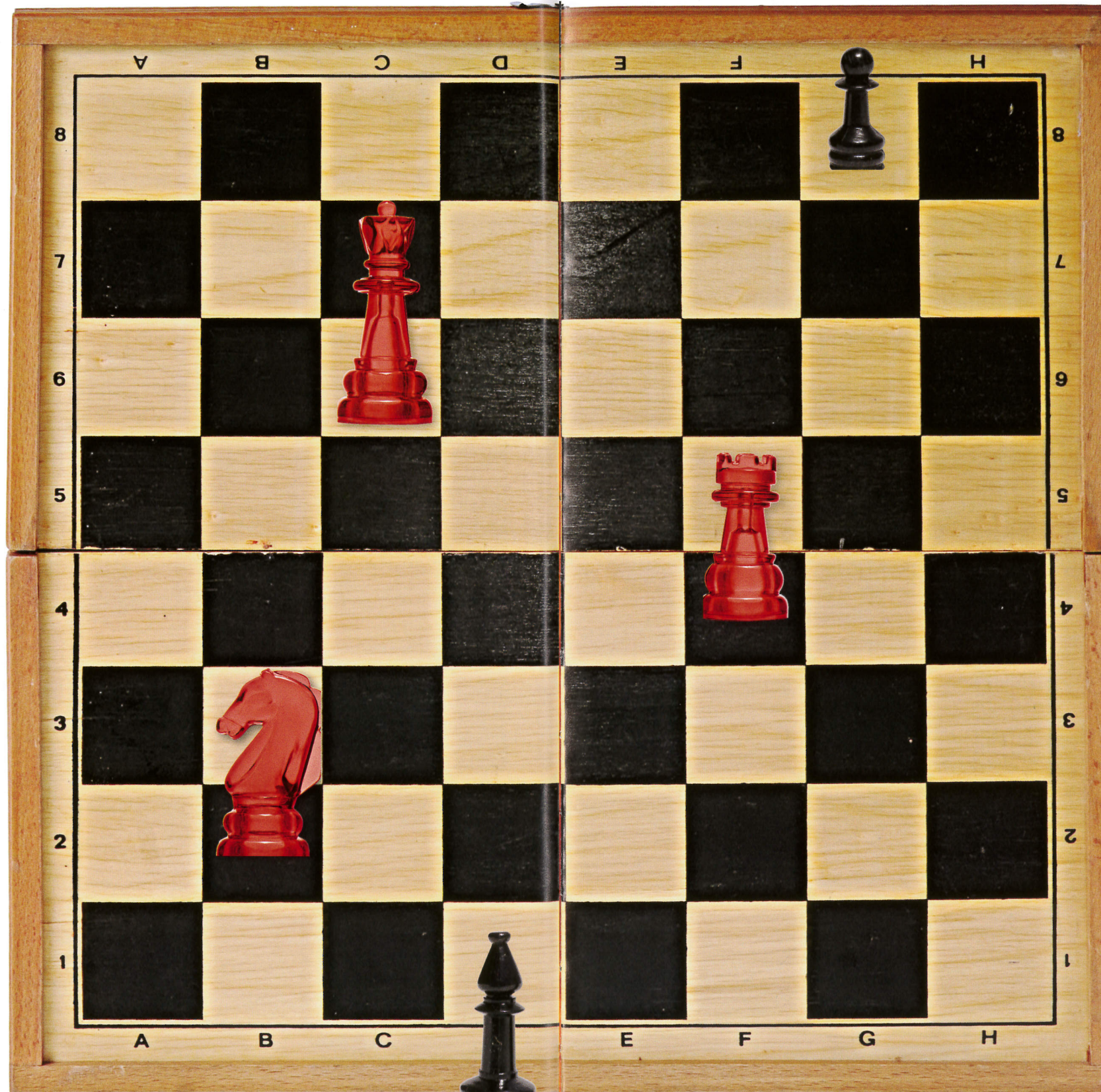
5 At the time, the playing pieces were *Shah* (the king); *Firzan* (a general, who became the **queen** in modern games); *Fil* (an **elephant** that is now the bishop); *Faras* (Arabic for "horse"); *Rukh* (a **chariot** that is now the castle, or rook); and *Baidaq* (the **pawn**).

A 13th-century manuscript from Spain shows **women playing chess**.



7 The **rules** of chess have not changed in nearly 500 years.

8 There are **169,518,829,100,544,000,000,000,000** ways to play the first ten moves in chess.



9 Travelers going from Persia to Spain took the game with them and **introduced chess to Europe**.

10 A Russian chess champion won a match with a move used by the Arab master **Al-Suli** 1,000 years ago.



11 The word **"checkmate"** comes from the Persian word *Shahmat*, meaning "the king is dead."

12 In the 18th and 19th centuries people traveled miles to watch the **"Iron Muslim,"** a chess-playing robot whose moves were actually made by a chess master hiding below the board.



13 Fifteen different chess masters operated the "Iron Muslim" during its **85-year reign** over other top players of the day.



14 Today chess is played everywhere. About **three million chess sets** are sold every year in the United States alone.

15 Two German men set a record in 2010 for the **longest** chess game to date: 40 hours and 20 minutes.



Chessboard