

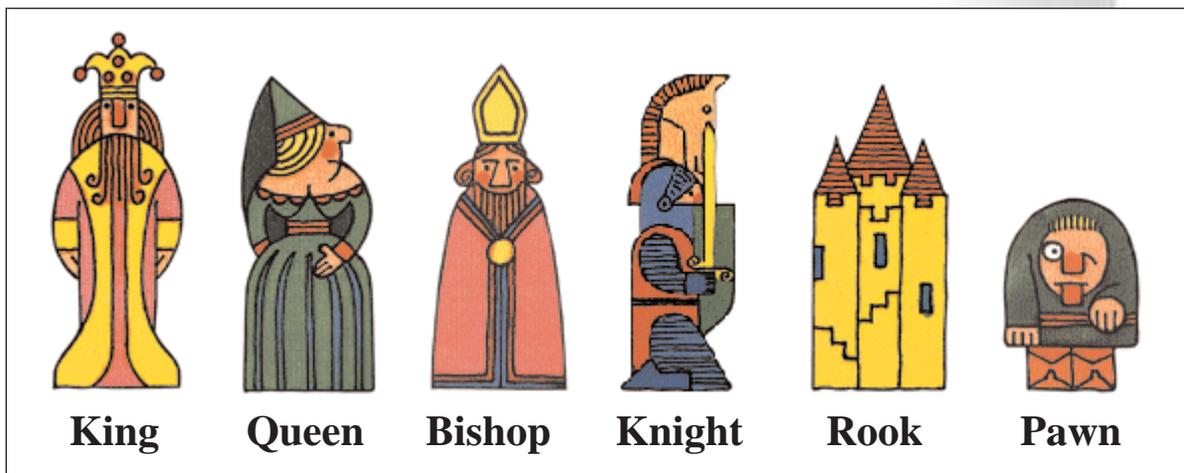
# Designing Chess Sets for the Zen of It

I invite all of you to join me in the joy of designing an original chess set. I promise to make it very easy for you, so you needn't know how to play chess in order to design the set.

This is truly something you do because you want to, not because you feel you have to. AND, and it's a big AND, AND here you don't get graded. Nobody says "Good" or "Bad" or "Beautiful" or "Ugly." What it's all about is using your imagination.

Write your idea, or sketch it on paper, or make a painting, or better yet, make a model. Even if you make only the basic pieces, it's good enough. You can take as long as you want. You can work alone, or with someone else. Anything goes. All I want is for you to have fun. Promise?

Actually, to be honest, it's not all I want. What I'd like, what I'd really, really like, is for you to send me a picture of your set, pleeeeeeaaassssee. In return I've included one of my sets just for you alone, which you can cut out and construct for yourself. But you can cut it out only if you send me a picture of yours, pleeeeeeaaassssee.



Look, it's really easy. There are only six characters you need to design. You probably recognize them from your history classes. Take a look. For now let me tell you how I went about designing some of my sets.

Then I promise to make it easy for you by describing the pieces in more detail so that you have an idea of who the characters are and how they move on the board.

**Have fun**

## Salt and Pepper Shakers



Look at a salt shaker. What do you see? I look at a salt shaker on a table in a diner in Tuckahoe, et voila, I see a Queen.

I look at another salt shaker in the restaurant of a hotel in North Carolina, and I see a King.

I'm on a flight to Paris, and I notice the small salt and pepper shaker set on my lunch tray. Hmmmm, those would make great Pawns. I pick out the Rook from an assortment of shakers displayed in the Galleria. I find the Knight in a kitchen supply store downtown.

Now I have the whole set designed ...well ...not quite. What do I do for the board? Judy comes up with the obvious. "Gene," she asks, "where do you usually see salt shakers?" Aha! Of course! On tablecloths. Not just any tablecloths, but red and white checkered tablecloths.

Bingo! A complete chess set. *Is that good* or **is that good?**



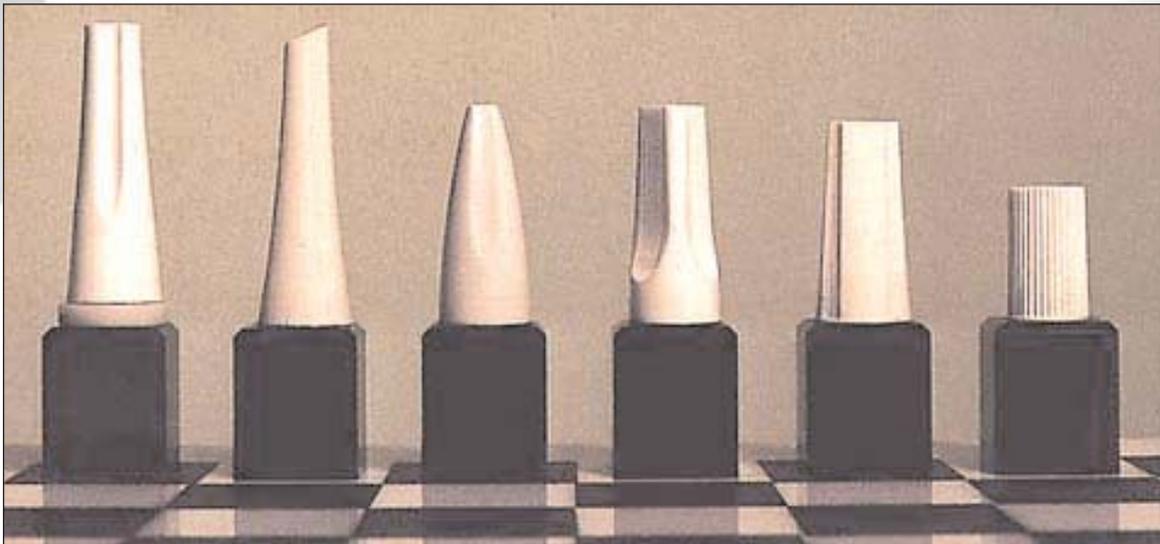
## Nail Polish Bottles

Judy is shopping for nail polish in the drugstore. She quickly finds what she's looking for. Me? I'm going to be here for a while; I'm just starting to have fun. Look with me. What do you think? These two tall ones are definitely the King and the Queen. Hmmmm, I think this triangular looking one will work well as the Knight, while this squarish one could be the Rook.

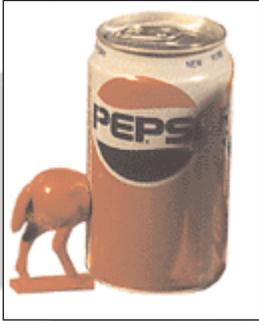
Of course, I've got it; these smaller ones here are the Pawns.

Now what about the Bishops? Would you believe that it takes one whole year before I finally find the Bishops ...in a London store.

*Heeeere's* the set.



## Coke vs Pepsi



Have you noticed how many different containers cola comes in? Here I am once more on a flight to Europe, and the flight attendant is serving refreshments. Hey, I've never seen these small Coca-Cola cans before. They're cute; they'd make great Pawns. Oh boy, another challenge, another chess set coming up!

Now, it's obvious that if one side is going to be Coke, the other side has to be ...that's right, Pepsi, of course.

Let me use bottles of Coke and Pepsi for the Bishops. Later I remember that in France, the cans are somewhat smaller than the ones in the United States. Those can be the Rooks. Great! Now, what to do for the Kings? I need cans larger than the ones for traditional Coke and Pepsi since I want the King to be imposing. Hey, how about beer cans? That's it, beer cans! I'll wrap labels around them and I'll have the Kings.

What about the Queens? Of course. Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi.

So far, so good, but what about the Knights? Those were quite a challenge. Finally the Aha! solution comes to me as I walk past a store that displays trophies. And here I see the solution: I see this horse's ass on a trophy.

**Take a look.**



# Playing Cards

Do you play cards? What do you see when you look at your favorite cards? I'm playing cards with Dad and it strikes me that the King and Queen are obvious candidates for yet another set.

Now comes the problem: do I make Jack the Bishop or the Knight? And if I make Jack one of them, what do I use for the other?

I decide to let Jack be the Knight because, for me, Jack's personality matches that of the Knight more closely.

Now I'm really stuck. What do I do for the Bishop? That's when my uncle Léon gives me a solution (You all know my French Uncle Léon -- he's the one who taught me how to play chess when I was nine years old and growing up in Paris.). He tells me that in France, a Bishop is considered the equivalent of a court Jester in the days that real Kings ruled the country. And so I asked my talented friend, Dan Nevins, to draw Jesters for the Bishops.

I decide to make Tens the Rooks, and you'll have to admit I come up with a really good idea when I realize that dice make excellent companions to the set as Pawns.

Now, if one side is for Hearts and Diamonds, you know the other side is made up of Spades and Clubs. Finishing the set is simply a matter of pasting the cards around wooden pegs.

**Thank you, Dad.**



# Hardware Store



Oh, Oh! I can't think of any other store in which we can have as much fun rummaging for ideas for chess sets as a hardware store, any hardware store, in any country. Take a look at these two sets.

One is made with doorknobs for cabinets. That's right, the knobs you use to open cabinets, probably in your kitchen or dining room or living room. The other is made with brass thingamabobs.

**GOODY, GOODY!!**



# Canal Street

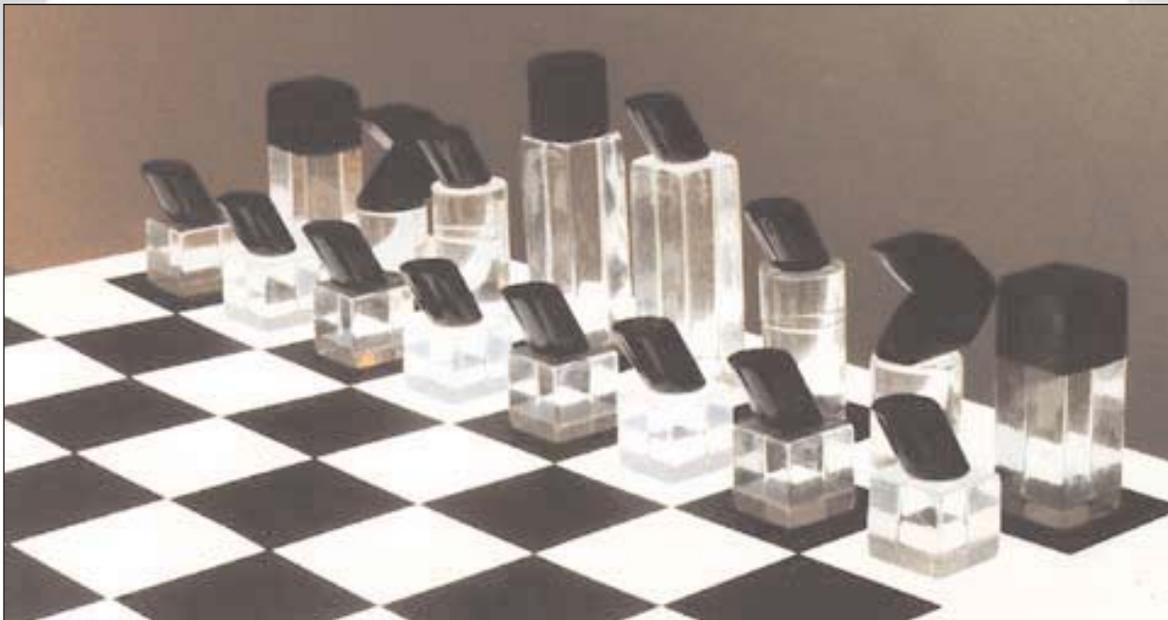


Here I am, walking on Canal Street in downtown New York. Out of nowhere I feel pulled into this whatshamacallitkindastore that sells everything made of plastic. Now here's this table with all these funny doohickies: some are cubes, others are cylinders, and others are other shapes. What would you do with them?

I become totally absorbed for I don't know how long, and a set takes on a life of its own; I'm just combining the pieces as if they're telling me what to do. Now I need a board. Don't ask me where this idea comes from, but it comes. How about one of those rectangular ceiling lights? I can put it on a table and plug it into the electric outlet so I can turn it on and off.

And then, to distinguish the black boxes from the white ones, I get some black contact paper, cut it into squares, and paste them so that the corners touch one another.

**Taaaaa DAAAAA!**



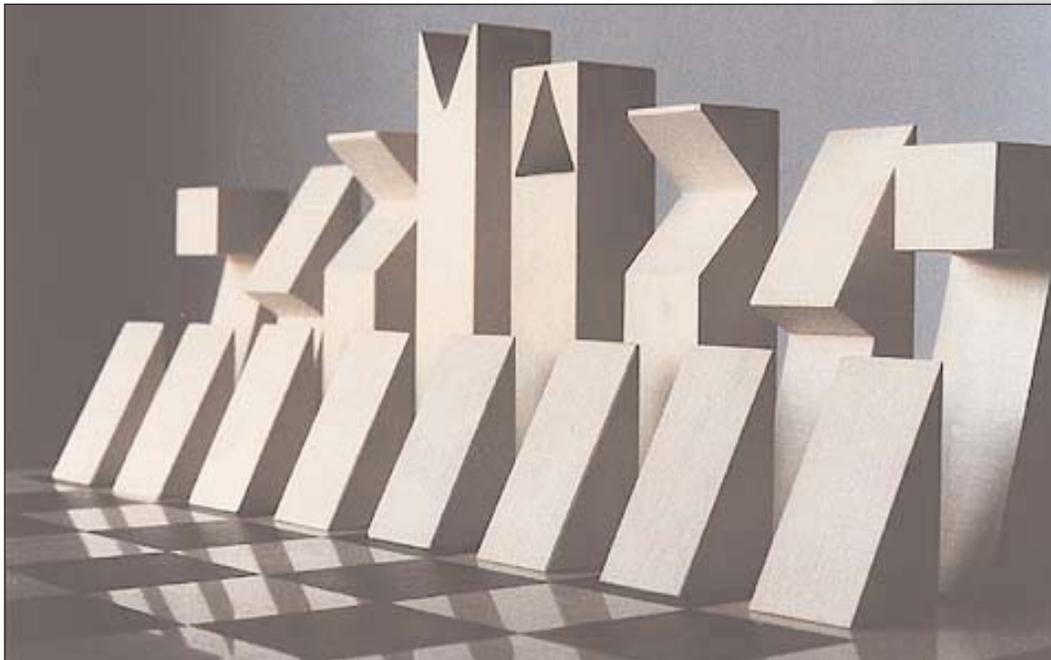
# Original Designs



So far, all the sets I've shown you were made from (not so) ordinary, everyday objects. However, some of my sets come from my imagination. What do *you* imagine?

Here are a couple of sets made of wood. For these, I experimented with balsa wood – the kind you use to make model airplanes. Once I liked them, I brought them to my friend, Jerry Stern, a craftsman with wisdom in his fingers, who created them in all kinds of wood.

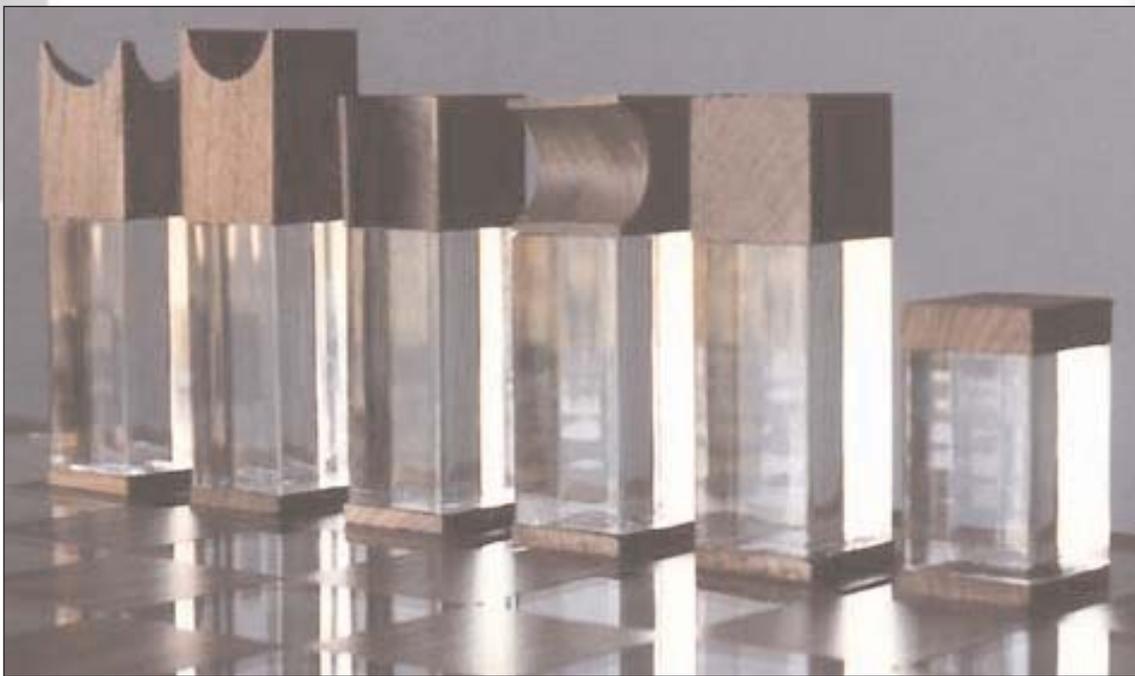
*What do you think?*



## Original Designs continued



Other sets are made of metal. Here too, I found a craftsman to do the finished set, after I cut the model out of cardboard.



And others still are made of a combination of materials. Here's one that combines wood and plastic.

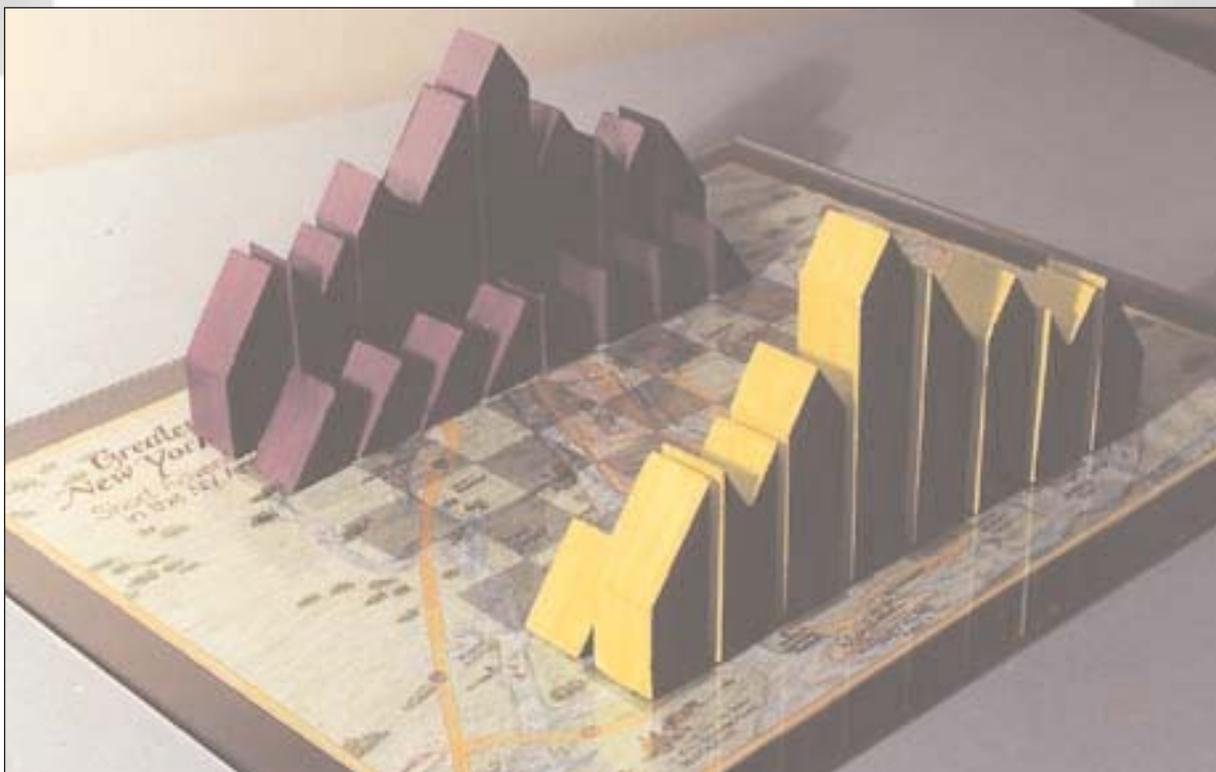
By the way, an art director once looked at my designs and referred to them as "*irreducible minimums*." I liked that. He's right; my simple forms capture the essence of the chess pieces.

## Original Designs continued

### New York City

For instance, here's one I really like. Pressed against one another, the pieces form a cityscape. What better place to put them than on a map of New York City.

Pull them apart, take each piece, paint one side "daylight," the other side "nighttime," and you have a little ray of sunshine (like you).



# Now It's Your Turn



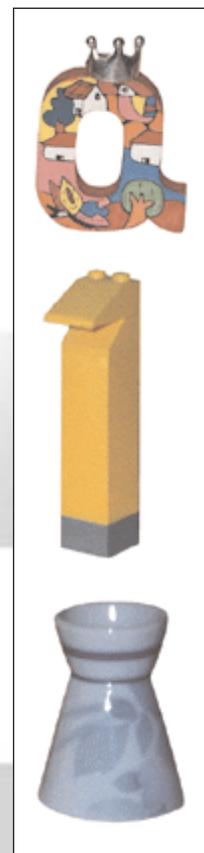
Let me keep my promise to make it easy for you to understand a very little bit about the game and the characters so you can bring a smile to your mind as you discover the extraordinary in the ordinary. O.K. If you look at the way a chessboard looks, you'll be quick to realize that it's the same as a checkerboard. Unlike checkers, however, here you play on all the squares, not on only the dark ones.

As in checkers, there are two sides: the good guys and the bad guys. Needless to say, you're always the good guys -- no matter which side you take -- and the other side is the bad guys.

The goal of the game is also simple; whoever takes the other guys' King first wins. Here you don't jump over the other guy to take him, you simply take his space and remove him from the board. Have you got that? Good.

So here's the little army you have to work with. As I mentioned before, there are only six characters you need to know: there are the King and the Queen, there's the Rook who sits in the corner, and in between are the Bishop and the Knight. In front of these are the Pawns. Altogether, for each side, there is one King and Queen; two Bishops, Knights, and Rooks; and eight Pawns.

For now, let me describe each character in more detail, so you have a good sense of his or her personality, of the relationship among the pieces, and of how each moves on the board. Soon, you should begin to have an image of what you want *your* chess set to look like. To help you, I'll show you a picture for each character which will give you an idea of the range of designs that are possible.





## The King

The King is the most important character. As I mentioned, lose your King and you've had it; the game is over. Kaput. Finished. Done. Over. You can lose any other piece and the game continues, but lose your King, and you can go watch television. So let's think of a King. What words would you use to describe him?

**Regal Royal Majestic Prrrrroud Standing tall Stately**

Do you see a crown on his head? A cape? Maybe. A throne? That's up to you.

Now the King ain't the type to go gallivanting around. I mean he'll fight if he has to, but by and large, he stays close to home and lets the others do the fighting for him. He just wants to be protected. Certainly, as King, he can go in any direction, but not too far. And so the King moves one box at a time in any direction.



## The Queen

What words do you think of to describe her? Probably similar to those we used to describe her mate.

**Royal Regal Majestic Graceful**

Probably not as tall as the King. After all, in the olden days no one stood taller than the King (*things sure have changed*).

Now if the King is the most important, the Queen is the most powerful. Let me tell you something about her: Don't mess with the Queen, don't get in her way, she is powerful.

She sees one of her roles in life as protecting her King, and there is absolutely nothing she won't do to take care of her sovereign. And so, she has the ability to move as many boxes as she wants, in any direction, straight or diagonally.



## The Rook

The Rooks are lookouts at the corners of the kingdom, and are similar to the watch towers of a castle. Compared to the Queen, the Rooks are the next most powerful. If anything happens to her "you know, if she's taken by the bad guys" the two Rooks together are mucho strong. They are not necessarily graceful, but they radiate power. They are not loud, not boisterous. They don't make a lot of noise, but they are:

**Strong    Efficient    Dependable    Trustworthy**

Otherwise, they mind their business and move vertically or horizontally, in a straight line, as many boxes as they want.



## The Bishop

Bishops? Yes, Bishops, as in the church Bishops. As you remember from your history classes, in the days of Kings and Queens, there was an individual in Court who represented the church. The individual was:

**Direct   Incisive   Focused   Intelligent**

It shouldn't take much to imagine the way a Bishop looks. Trust your instincts. Bishops can move only diagonally, but in any direction and for as many boxes as they want.



## The Knight

Now come the Knights. Aha! The Knights in shining armor. Yeah! Sir Gallahad, Sir Lancelot, Saint George slaying the dragon. The Knights riding off to the crusades. The Knights jousting. And because they ride horses, Knights can move all over the place. As a matter of fact, they are the only ones who can jump over another piece to get to where they want to go. Others, they're stuck if some piece stands in their way. Not the knights.

And so, the Knights are:

**Playful   Graceful   Witty   Adventurous**

They cover a broad range of territory. They move two boxes up or down, that's vertically or horizontally, and then one to the side.



## The Pawn

Last come the foot soldiers, the front line, the army, the Pawns as they're called. What they lack in power and stature, they make up for in number: there are eight of them. They're:

**Street-smart   Shrewd   Witty   Ambitious**

They move slowly. They can't move backward, they can only move forward, slowly, one box at a time. Oh! Okay! The first time they move, from their starting position, they can move two boxes forward, but that's the only time; they can't do it again.

And something else. If they want to take an opponent, they can only do it when the bad guy is on a diagonal.

On the other hand, Pawns do live a charmed life. Remember how we said they were ambitious? Well, listen to this: If they reach all the way, that's all the way to the other end of the board, like the frog that turns into a Prince when the Princess kisses him, the Pawn can become whatever he wants to be: a Queen, a Knight, a Bishop, a Rook. Just not a King. How about that!



There you have it: a description of the six characters that make up the set, the King, Queen, Rook, Bishop, Knight, and Pawns. I've given you an idea of what they look like, a sense of their personalities, a picture of the way they move. I'll leave it at that, and let your imagination take over. I fold a sheet of plastic; what do you see? I see a Queen or a Bishop.

Look at the top of a violin; what do you see? I see a Knight.

What about a set made of Lego? Hmmm ...Light bulbs, and bolts and screws, and perfume bottles, and ping pong balls, and golf tees, and springs, and rocks, and famous buildings, and and and and...

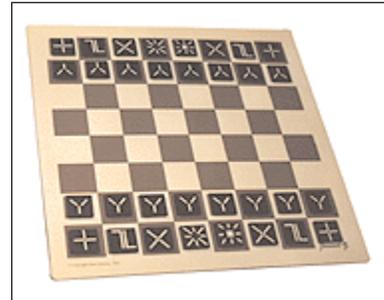
If I'm really lucky, you'll let me see what you do, and maybe ...hey, listen to this, it's an idea that just came to me... maybe I'll put together another web site with all the ideas from all the six-year-old children -- those who will be six, those who are six, and those who would like to be six again. So pleeeeeeaaassssee send me a picture of your set. That would be great!



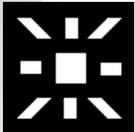
# No, I didn't Forget. A Promise is a Promise

Do you remember that I promised to give you one of my sets, if you promised to send me a picture of the one you design? So on the next page is mine for you to cut out. But remember our agreement: you can't cut it out until you send me a picture of yours. *Oh, com'on now, a promise is a promise.*

Take a look at my set. Tell me, what do the designs mean? What do they stand for? I find it interesting that many have trouble figuring them out. For instance, let me tell you about my good friend, Ashok. (*Don't tell him I told you about him.*) Ashok is a brilliant chess player; he has won tournaments, and he has some important title in the world of chess -- something like "Master." He couldn't figure it out. I had fun watching his face scrunch up from trying. I guess that's what happens to some of those who used to be six years old.



All of you who are six years old figure it out in no time at all. Right? The designs show how the pieces move. So for example:



The **King** moves one box at a time in any direction.



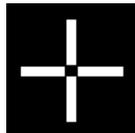
The **Queen** moves as many boxes as she wants in any direction.



The **Bishops** move as many boxes as they want, but only diagonally.



The **Knights** move two boxes ahead and then one to the side, beginning in any direction.



The **Rooks** move as many boxes as they want, but only up or down, that's vertically or horizontally, not diagonally.



The **Pawns** can only move forward, never backward, and only one box at a time, but they move diagonally to take a bad guy.

Now you're ready to print and cut out the set on the next page. First, you may want to paste the page onto a piece of cardboard, so it will be easier for you to move the pieces after they're cut out. Then, you may want to ask your mommy or your daddy to help you use a razor blade to cut along the lines. If your parents are busy, be sure another adult you know helps you use the razor blade. I've included a board. Here, too, you may want to paste it onto a piece of cardboard. (*By the way, I glued my pieces onto magnets and used a piece of metal for the board. You may want to do the same.*)

Now all that's left to do is to ask the Oncle Léon in your life to teach you how to play the way mine taught me. Merci, mon Oncle.

**Have fun**

