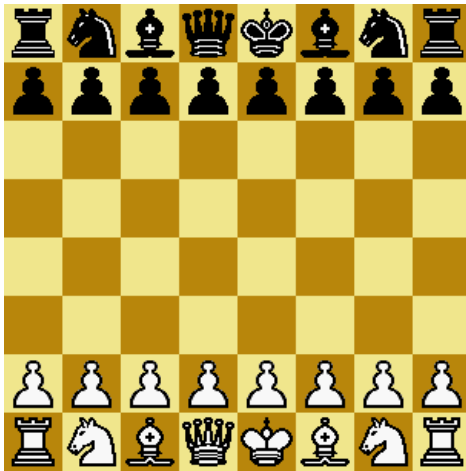


GambitVB



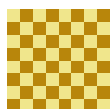
# GambitVB

## User Guide

# Gaming against a chess program

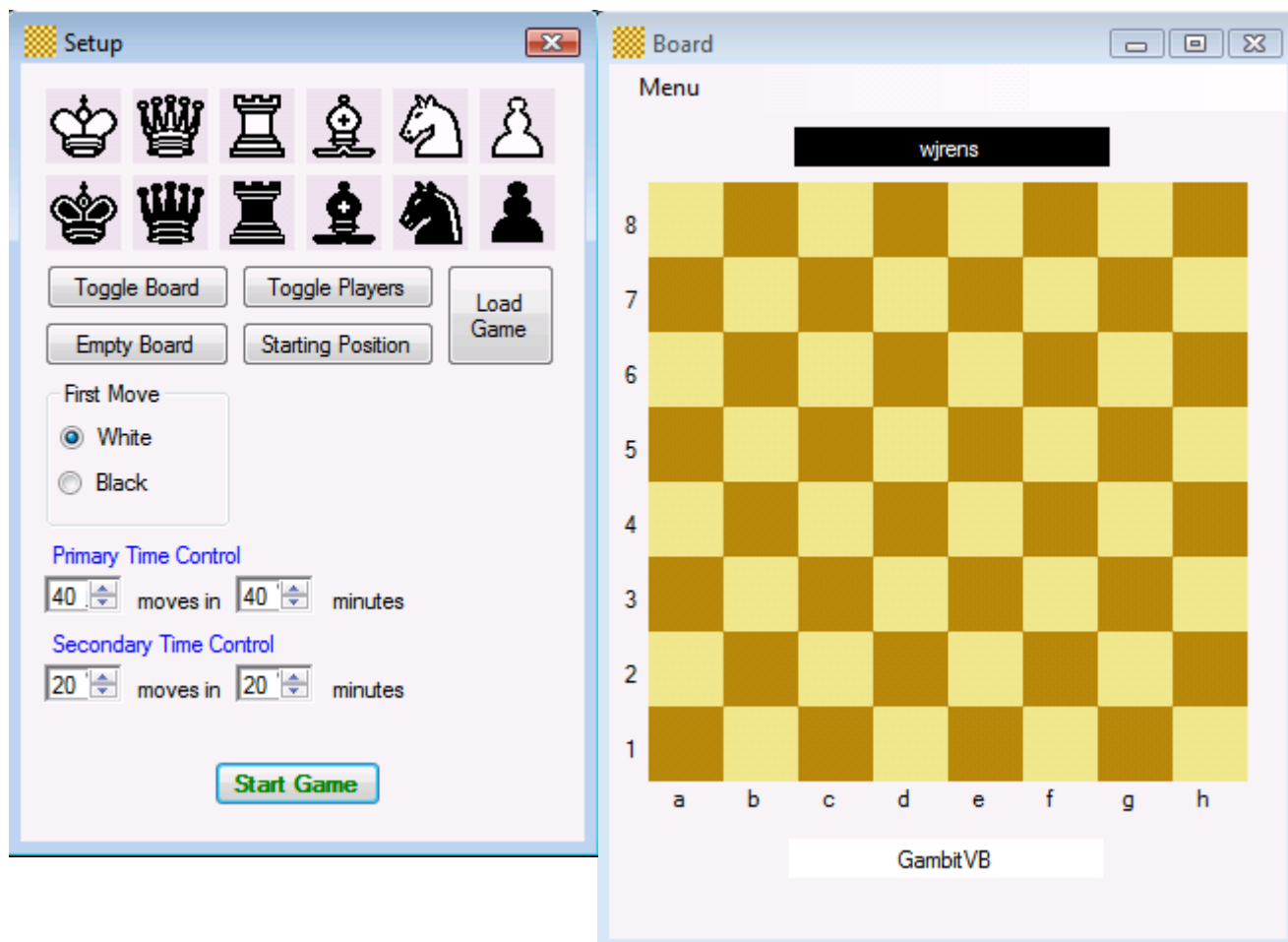
Version 3.1

Willem J. Rens



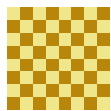
## 1 Playing a Game

When you start GambitVB, you get the forms **Setup** and **Board** as shown.

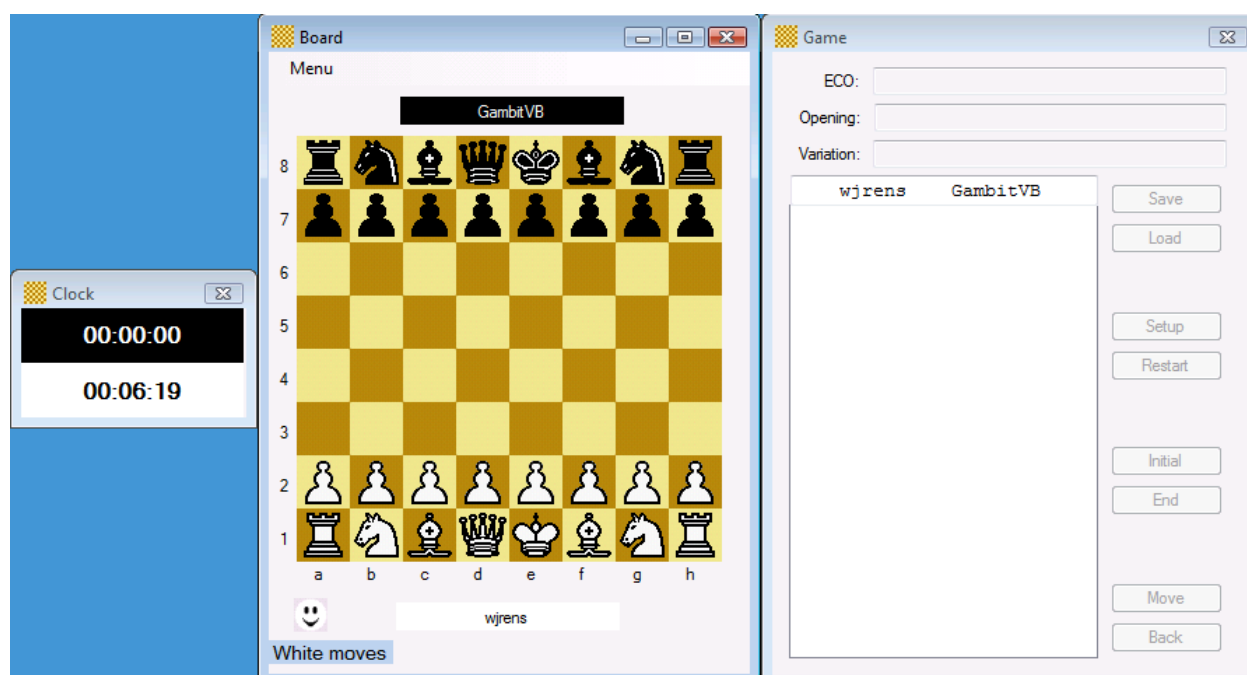
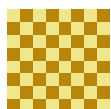


You will see an example of how to play a game by executing the following steps

1. If not done yet, start GambitVB.
2. Click on button "Starting Position".





3. Click button "Toggle Players", which should place your name at the white side and "GambitVB" at the black side.
4. Now, start a game by clicking button "Start Game".

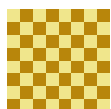


By pressing the “Start Game” button, the **Setup** form disappeared and both forms **Clock** and **Game** popped up. Form **Clock** is placed left of form **Board**, as in normal competition chess. Nevertheless, you can move the forms to wherever you want it.

You will note that the white clock is updated each three seconds. Note also the status strip at the bottom of the Board form with the text “White moves”, which is printed for the first move. Further, see the smiley left on the status strip; this smiley is always white or black according who is going to move.

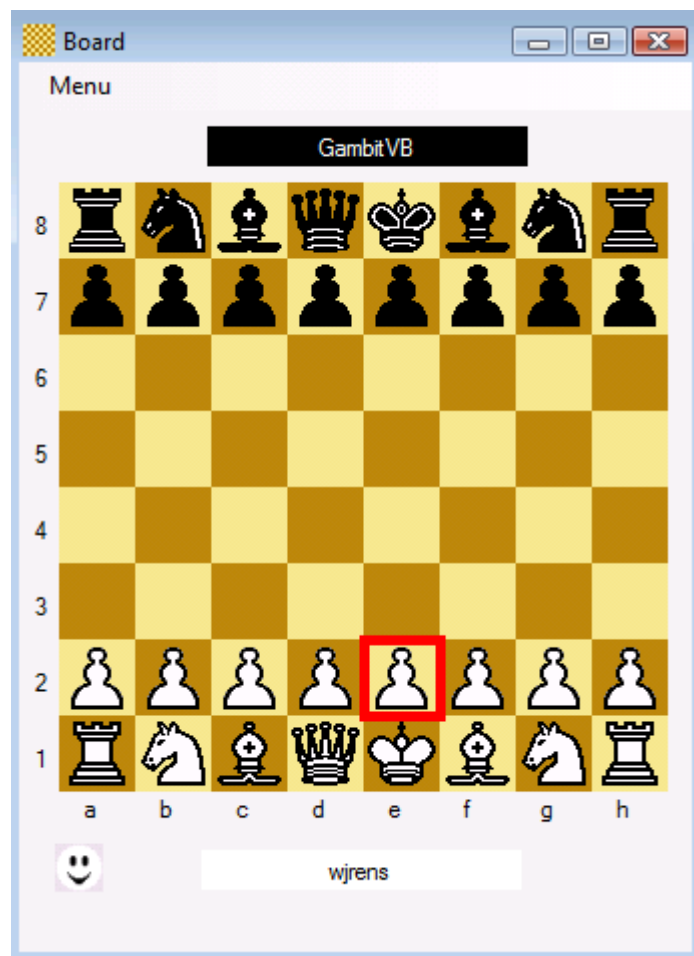
Any time, you exit the program by clicking button  on the **Board** form, after which the program prompts you for a confirmation. (You will discover that clicking button  in other forms only minimizes the form into the taskbar rather than closing the form.)

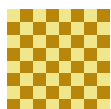
5. Let us assume you want to play 1.e2-e4, so click square e2, which results in a red outline around square e2.



You have clicked square e2 and now, according to the rules of chess, you have to play that pawn. You cannot change your mind about that anymore. (How to get around this becomes clear later in this guide.)

6. Click square e4.





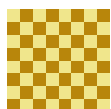
What happened is that move 1.e2-e4 has been accepted, and that GambitVB immediately played 1. ... c7-c5; highlighted by the green outlines. Immediately, because it found the move in its openings book. If it does not find a move in the book, the program will search a move for some time, trying to comply with the current time control configuration. The program is happy if you also try to play within those limits, but you will not be enforced to do so. Time control is explained in §5.3.

After each move, Form Game is updated; note the moves and opening information.

The green outlines will be automatically removed with the input of your next move. If you do not want to wait for that, just click somewhere on the background area left or right of the name labels and the green outlines will disappear.

Special moves are entered as follows.

- **Castling:** Execute only the move of the king, e.g. **e1** to **g1** for white short castling. The program will move the rook.
- **En Passant capturing:** Execute only the move of the pawn, e.g. **e5** to **d6**. The program will remove the pawn on d5.
- **Pawn promotion:** Execute the move of the pawn, e.g. **h7** to **h8**. The program will launch a form that allows you to select a promotion from queen, rook, bishop, or knight.



## 2 Finishing a Game

When a game finishes, e.g. by checkmate or stalemate, it prints a message as shown below.

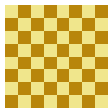


Now, the **Game** form is in **Review mode**, discussed in §7.

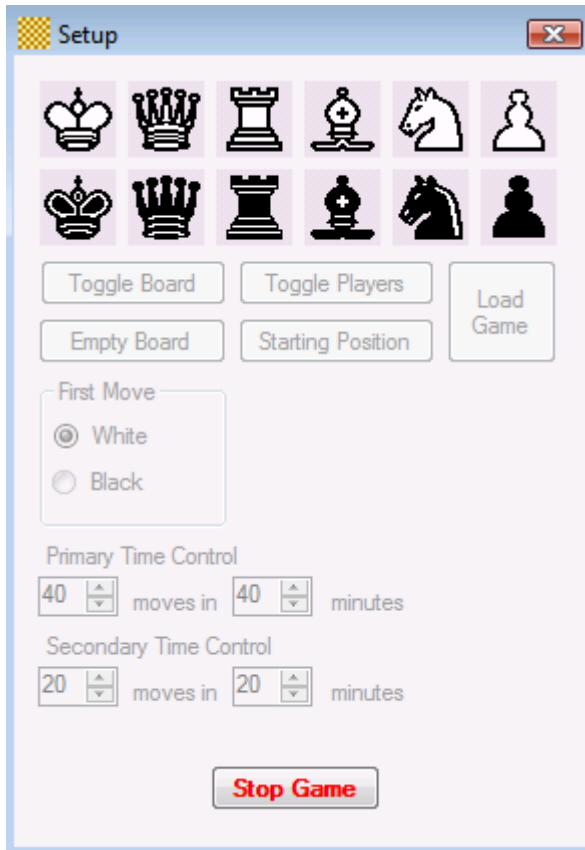
If you want to start a new game, click button "Setup" on the Game form, which loads the **Setup** form again.

To exit the program any time, use button .

In fact, this is all you must know to play a game. However, there is more for your comfort as a chess player, which will be explained in the next paragraphs.



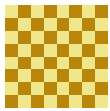
### 3 Stopping a Game



One way to stop a running game is using the close button in the upper right corner of the **Board** form, which closes GambitVB without saving the game.

For a more elegant way to stop a running game, you have to use the **Setup** form. This form did not really disappear when you clicked the “Start” button; it was just minimized. So, bring it back by clicking the form in the taskbar.

Note the “Start Game” button has been changed into a “Stop Game” button. Click that button and the program goes directly into **Review** mode.



## 4 The Program Modes

The program is always in one of three modes.

### Setup Mode

In this mode, you see Form **Setup** and Form **Board** and you can freely move the pieces over the board as well as make other choices by using Form **Setup**.

In this mode, the button at the bottom always displays the text **Start Game**.

You go from **Setup** Mode to **Game** Mode by clicking button “Start Game”.

You go from **Setup** Mode to **Review** Mode by clicking button “Load Game”.

### Game Mode

In this mode, you play a game of chess against GambitVB. You see by default the forms **Clock**, **Board**, and **Game**. Form **Setup** (minimized into the Windows task bar) has a button at the bottom with the text **Stop Game**.

You go from **Game** Mode to **Review** mode by clicking button “Stop Game” on Form **Setup** or, automatically, if a game has come to the end.

### Review Mode

In this mode, you see Form **Board** and Form **Game** and you can easily:

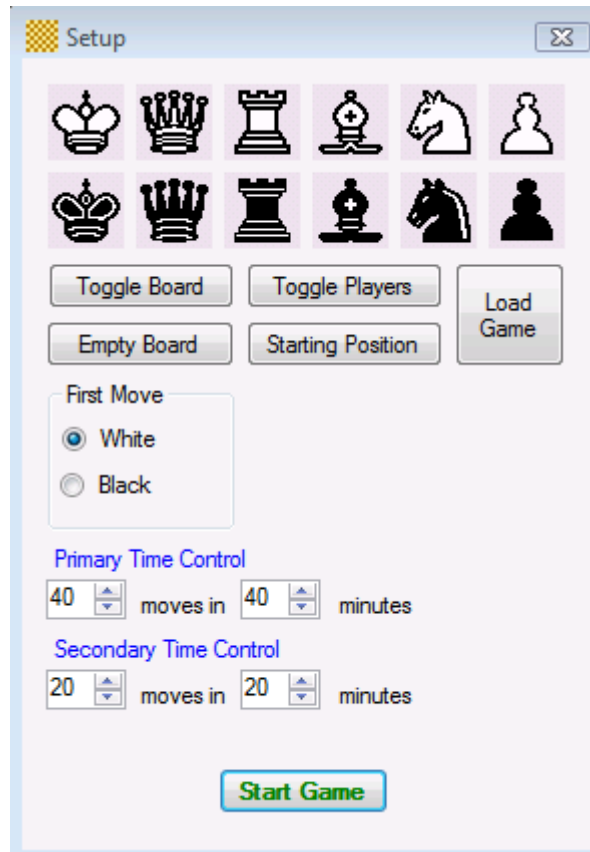
- review a game and restart the game from any position
- save the game to file
- load a previously saved game

You go from **Review** Mode to **Game** Mode by clicking button “Restart” on Form **Game**.

You go from **Review** Mode to **Setup** Mode by clicking button “Setup” on Form **Game**.

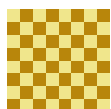


## 5 Using the Setup Form



The Start/Stop button implicitly indicates the program mode.

1. The button shows the text **Start Game**.  
The program is in **Setup** Mode.  
The **Setup** form is available to configure a new game.
2. The button shows the text **Stop Game**.  
The program is in **Game** mode.  
Only the “Stop” button is enabled.
3. The button is dimmed.  
The program is in **Review** mode.  
No **Setup** functionality is available.



## 5.1 The Pieces

To place another piece on the board:

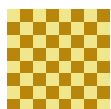
1. Select a piece on Form **Setup**. The selection will be highlighted by a red rectangle.
2. Click a square on Form **Board**. The selected piece will be placed on that square.  
If the square is already occupied, the square is emptied first.

To get rid of a red selection on Form **Setup**, click the selected piece again.

You can also remove a piece just by clicking it on the board. Then, if you want so, move that removed piece to another square, just by clicking the other square.

## 5.2 The Buttons

Toggle Board	turns board and players The default <b>Board</b> rendering has square a1 in the lower left corner.
Toggle Players	turns the players only, which implicitly changes the colors to play with.
Empty Board	removes all pieces from the board.
Starting Position	sets up the initial chess position. using this button also enables castling; see §8.4.
First Move	selects a radio button indicating which color moves first.
Load Game	places the program in <b>Review</b> mode. First, the user will be prompted for a previously saved game file.



## 5.3 Time Control

The chess power of the program depends (amongst other thing) on time control settings. The default and optimized settings are:

Primary: 40 moves in 40 minutes  
Secondary: 20 moves in 20 minutes

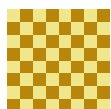
This means that GambitVB tries:

- to play move number 40 within 40 minutes
- to play move number 60 within 60 minutes
- to play move number 80 within 80 minutes
- etcetera

GambitVB does not take action when a player (or GambitVB itself) runs out of clock time. It is up to the chess player to take that decision.


If you set up fewer seconds per moves, you get less chess performance. Alternatively, you get more performance with more seconds. This will be limited somewhere by your hardware configuration and GambitVB program limitations.

Further, other programs running on your computer, such as security products and system maintenance tools, may slow down the performance of GambitVB.

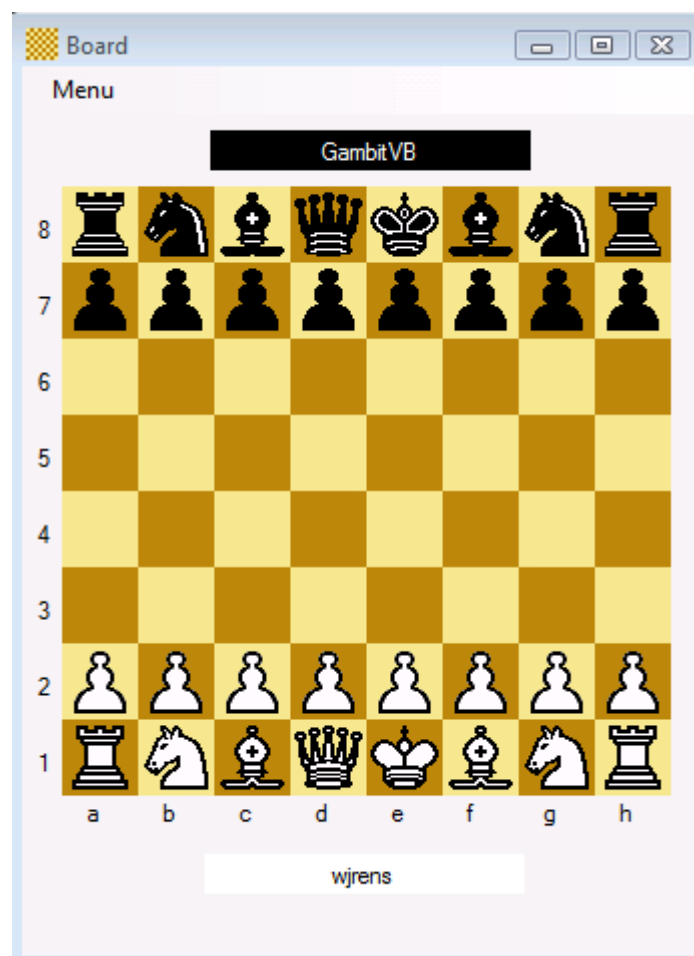


## 6 Using the Board Form

In **Setup mode**, you can add a piece using the graphics on the **Setup** form and remove a piece from the board by just clicking on it. This way, you can set up a position of your choice and subsequently start a game by using the start game button on the **Setup** form. You can also quickly move a piece before starting a game; click it and subsequently click on the destination square.


GambitVB keeps you informed about program activities through the status bar at the bottom. Sometimes the text of the message is too long, in which cases you can widen the form by clicking the maximize button 

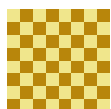
Clicking anywhere on the form will clear the status bar.



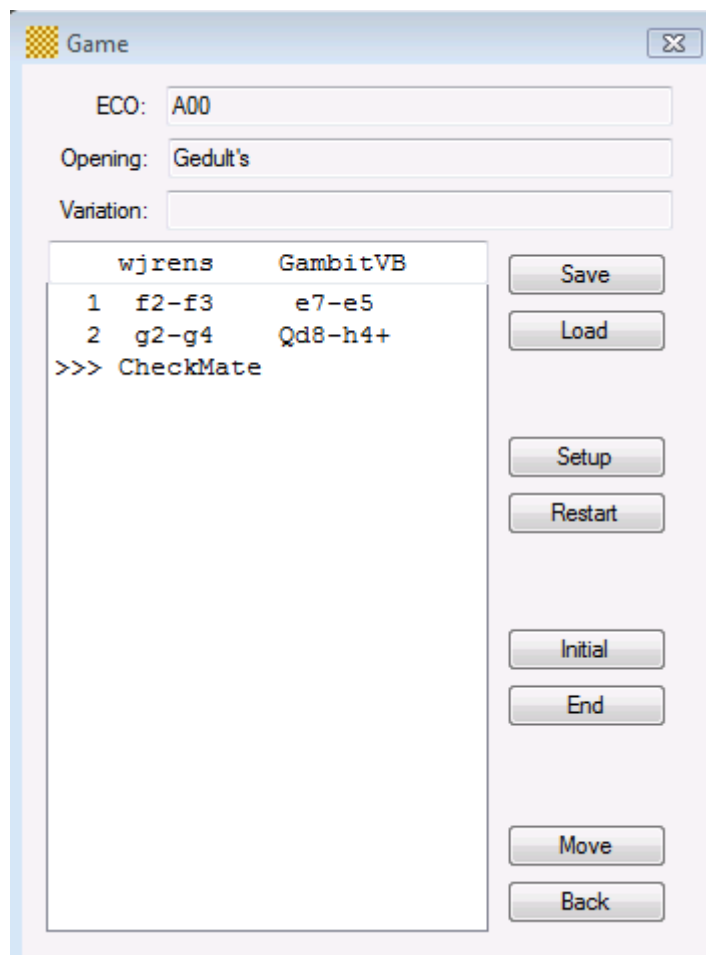


The **Board** form provides a menu with a few items explained in next table.

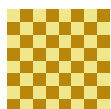
About GambitVB	displays a message box with a copyright statement and the GambitVB version number
Toggle Board	like “Toggle Board” in de <b>Setup</b> Form This option can be used in <b>Setup</b> and <b>Review</b> mode, not in <b>Game</b> mode
Spy	launches the <b>Spy</b> form only used in <b>Game</b> mode
Save board position	saves the board position to a text file The full name of the file will be printed in the status line. You can use this option in all three modes <b>Setup</b> , <b>Game</b> , and <b>Review</b> . Saved board positions can be reloaded with menu item “Load board position”.
Load board position	Loads a board previously saved with menu item “Save board position”. The program will prompt you for the full file name. This option is only active in mode <b>Setup</b> .
Exit	exits the program after confirmation If you want a game file, do not stop a game by using menu item Exit or button  ; use the Stop Game button on Form Setup instead.



## 7 Using the Game Form

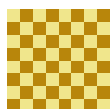


The buttons become active in **Review** mode only. Just move the mouse over a button (do not click, unless you want to use the option) and a help message is printed in the status line of the **Board** form.



Save	saves the game to a text file. The full name of the file will be printed in the status line.  (This is only useful, when you go back to an earlier position, because the game file is already automatically created when a game stops.)
Load	Imports a game previously created with button “Save”
Setup	Switches with the currently displayed position to <b>Setup</b> mode You cannot directly switch back from <b>Setup</b> mode to <b>Review</b> mode. (But, you can use button “Load Game” instead.)
Restart	Starts a new game from the currently displayed position
Initial	Displays the initial board position of the game
End	Displays the position after the last played move
Move	Displays one move forward
Back	Displays one move backward

- The functions behind the buttons are flexible in helping you to:
  - pause a game
  - review a game
  - save and reload (to review and/or to restart) a game later
  - resume a game at any point in the game.
- A game file is a readable text file. If you want it use the file again for loading, do not edit it, unless you know what you are doing.



## 8 Good to Know

### 8.1 Memory

At program startup, GambitVB allocates as much memory as the operating system allows it. Under certain circumstances, that memory gets full and the TreeSearcher is closed down overriding all other time control factors.

### 8.2 Output Files

GambitVB always creates a log file when a new game is started. It also creates a game file when a game goes into review mode. Further, if menu item “Save Board Position” is used, it creates a board file.

Files are created in directory \gambitVB on your home directory, typically:

“C:\Users\yourName\GambitVB”

Output files are numbered, for example the filename of a game file is “game.##.txt” with ## replaced a sequence number. If the sequence number of the previous game file is 12, than the oldest file is deleted and the remaining files are renumbered, so that file name “game.12.txt” comes available again.

If you want to keep a file longer, give it another name, or move it to another directory. (You can always reload a renamed and/or moved file.)

### 8.3 Drawing

A game does not stop for *draw by repetition of positions* or for the *fifty moves rule*. If that happens, a highlighted message is printed in the status line of the Board form, but it is up to the user to declare a draw.

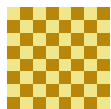
The log file is primarily intended for troubleshooting, but you can also use it to look for twofold and threefold repetition messages.

### 8.4 Castling

You can set up the initial chess position by:

1. using button “Start Position” on the **Setup** form
2. emptying the board and put the pieces one by one on the right place using the setup form.

In the second case, you cannot castle, because all pieces, put by you on the board, are classified as having moved. By the rules of chess, if the King or a Rook has ever moved, castling is not allowed.



## 8.5 Spying

In real time, **spying** can be activated by the user. The form Spy will pop up and will show:

- The current search depth
- The material evaluation for the currently found best variation
- The first and second move of that variation.
- The first and second move of the variation currently under investigation

The **Spy** form is launched by using the menu option in the **Board** form during a running game. As long as GambitVB is looking for moves in its openings book, you can start spying, but there will no content shown, until the book is closed.

Spying is intended for GambitVB developers, but chess starters may want to use the form to get advice for their own move.