

ChessSpider! 4.2

10/09/2025

Table of Contents

What is ChessSpider!?	2
Why ChessSpider!?	2
The Main Screen	4
File > Open	6
File > Recent Files	7
File > Exit	7
Repertoire > Go to Spider!	8
Repertoire > Open Repertoire File	10
Repertoire > Manage Repertoire File	10
Repertoire > Open and Manage Rep. File	11
Repertoire > Create Repertoire File	11
Repertoire > Copy Repertoire File	11
Repertoire > Open Rep. File Location	11
Game > Filter Games	
Filter Games by Header	12
Filter Games by Position	13
Filter Games by Endgame	14
Game > Load Next Game	14
Game > Load Previous Game	14
Game > Load Random Game	15
Game > Get Current ECO	15
Game > Get Current White	15
Game > Get Current Black	15
Game > Get Current Event	15
Game > Get Current Site	15
Game > Games Overview Mode	16
Game > Export Games	16
Position > Add to Repertoire File	17
Position > Find Position	17
Position > Rotate Board	17
Position > Toggle Infinite Analysis	18
Moves > Go to start	19
Moves > Got to end	19
Moves > Previous move in line	19
Moves > Next move in line	19
Moves > Enter previous variation	19
Moves > Enter next variation	19
Moves > Skip to last variation	20
Moves > Skip to next variation	20
Help > Help	21
Help > About	21
Frequently Asked Questions	22
Useful Keyboard Shortcuts	27

What is ChessSpider!?

ChessSpider! is an opening repertoire management system, as well as a PGN (*Portable Game Notation*) database manager. Initially the idea was to create a program that easily allowed users to keep up to date in their opening systems. It was found that a straightforward solution was not forthcoming. Thus the idea of creating a program, which, given any number of positions, could filter them out based on the user's preferred lines, was conceived. This program was personally used to great effect as, week after week, PGN games were downloaded, and filtered out repertoire games compared to stored lines. Repeating this effortless process periodically and consistently should greatly enhance one's knowledge and confidence in opening theory.

The program's initial idea was then expanded to the current version 4.2 of ChessSpider!. Simply put, a way of opening the resulting filtered files by the program itself (rather than relying on third-party software) was very desirable. Thus, the idea came about to create a PGN reader and management system. Now, the user can search for games by header data: White/Black/Event/Site, etc. as well as by position or Endgame type or a combination of these three search methods. Any valid PGN file can be opened, and the limit on the file size or number of games these PGN files may contain depends only on the user's computer's memory specifications.

Why ChessSpider!?

ChessSpider! has very intuitive, innovative, and fast search algorithms. Game data, positions, and endgame types can be searched for alone or combined. Obviously, one cannot fail to mention the functionality the program was initially created for! The user can create and maintain files with PGN moves (with or without move numbers). Each of these lines represents a position. Users will have a file for their "White positions" and another for their "Black positions". For example, my own White and Black repertoires have 150 positions combined. The program can be used on any PGN file, whether unannotated or heavily annotated with comments and variations. Searches include the variations too. ChessSpider! runs through the file and simultaneously finds the games one is interested in.

One can add and remove positions to any repertoire file. This is extremely easy through the Repertoire Manager. Duplicate positions are removed automatically and not allowed within this GUI. When replaying games, and a position of interest comes about, hitting a key (or using the corresponding menu item) will add this position to the currently open repertoire file. The next filtering by White and Black positions will include the positions one adds or removes from their repertoire files.

The user can keep and manage different repertoire files. For example, they can have "solid" White and Black repertoire files as well as, for instance, an "aggressive" set of files. Depending on the mood they're in, they can keep up-to-date in their preferred opening lines.

The principal idea for the program was for users to keep prepped up in their opening lines, and to a very high degree of depth. Rather than downloading files manually and running ChessSpider! on

them, there is an automatic feature which downloads, decompresses, and filters the latest issue of The Week In Chess (<https://www.theweekinchess.com>). Games from the greats interspersed with lesser players can now be at one's fingertips.

One other very important reason for using ChessSpider! is that it is very inexpensive compared to similar programs. ChessSpider!'s motto is indeed "For the price of a book, you get a library!"

The Main Screen



Figure 1: The Main Screen

This is the main screen of ChessSpider! 4.2. At the top left, one can see the board, where the games can be replayed. The notation panel is at the top right. If the game contains certain characters denoting a diagram, an inline diagram is shown alongside the moves.

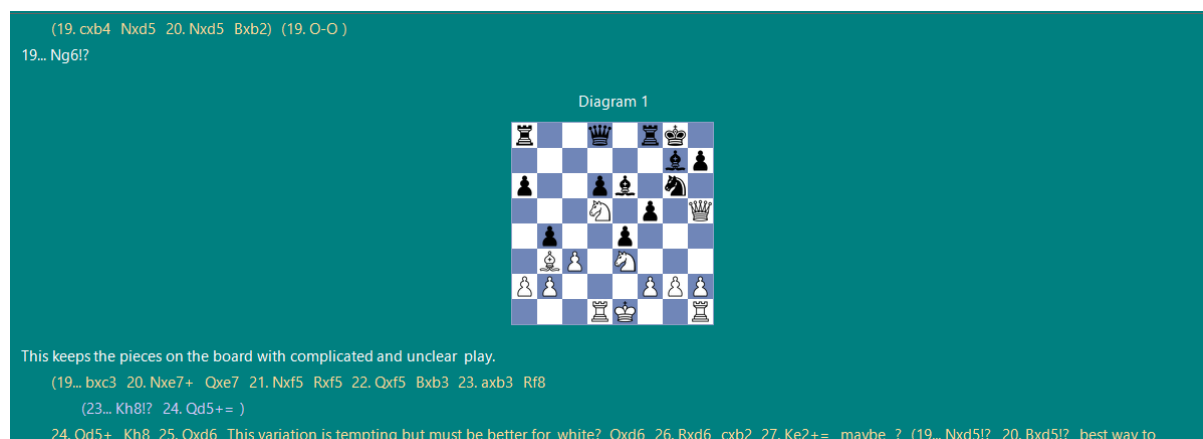


Figure 2: Inline diagrams

This diagram can be rotated by clicking on it. Different depth moves and comments can be seen highlighted in different colours. Up to four different nesting of variations are easily visible in complicated games. The engine panel sits at the bottom of the notation panel. Positions may be analysed and the analysis generated by the included Stockfish engine will be displayed here. The analysis is presented in three lines. While the engine is analysing, the user can load different games or even PGN files, and the position analysis will follow suit.

The current open PGN file can be seen underneath the engine panel, while the move navigation

buttons are below the board. When a position of interest comes about on the board, they may simply hit F10 and the position will be added to the currently open Repertoire file (see below).

The games list occupies the bottom half of the screen. One can see various information about each game, like, White, Black, their Elo ratings, Date, etc. Of note are the columns *Complexity* and *Text* which respectively indicate the complexity (total number of half moves, including sub-variations) and annotations contained in the games. All columns are sortable by clicking on their headers. Below the games list are grid navigation buttons which enable the user to move to the bottom or to the top of the list, whilst the other button enables one to clear any applied filter. The user may also enter a line number and click on the "Go to line" button (or hit ENTER) and ChessSpider! will jump to that line in the grid.

Discussion of the Menu Items

File > Open

This presents the user with a dialog where they select a PGN file to open. As mentioned before, there is no limitation on how large the PGN file is. Both unannotated games or games containing heavy textual comments and variations can be opened by ChessSpider!. These last two criteria can be filtered on in fact.

The screenshot shows a 'Filter Games' dialog box with a teal background. It has a title bar with a spider icon and the text 'Filter Games'. Below the title bar are three tabs: 'Header' (selected), 'Position', and 'Endgame'. The 'Header' tab contains several input fields: 'White:' and 'Black:' (text boxes), 'Event:' and 'Site:' (text boxes), 'White Elo:' with 'Min' and 'Max' buttons, 'Black Elo:' with 'Min' and 'Max' buttons, 'Year:' (text box), 'Annotator:' (text box), and 'ECO:' (dropdown menu). There is an 'Ignore Colours' checkbox. Below these fields are radio buttons for 'Result' with options '1-0', '0-1', '1/2-1/2', and 'Line'. At the bottom of the dialog, there are 'Complexity:' and 'Comments:' sections, each with 'Min' and 'Max' buttons. A yellow box highlights the 'Complexity:' and 'Comments:' fields. At the very bottom are 'Search', 'Reset', and 'Cancel' buttons.

Figure 3: Filtering on complexity/text

In this way, the user can find complex or simple games, as well as sparse or highly commented games.

File > Recent Files

This lists up to 20 PGN files that the user has opened. They are listed in order of when they were opened last, so that the most recently opened file sits at the top of the stack of files.

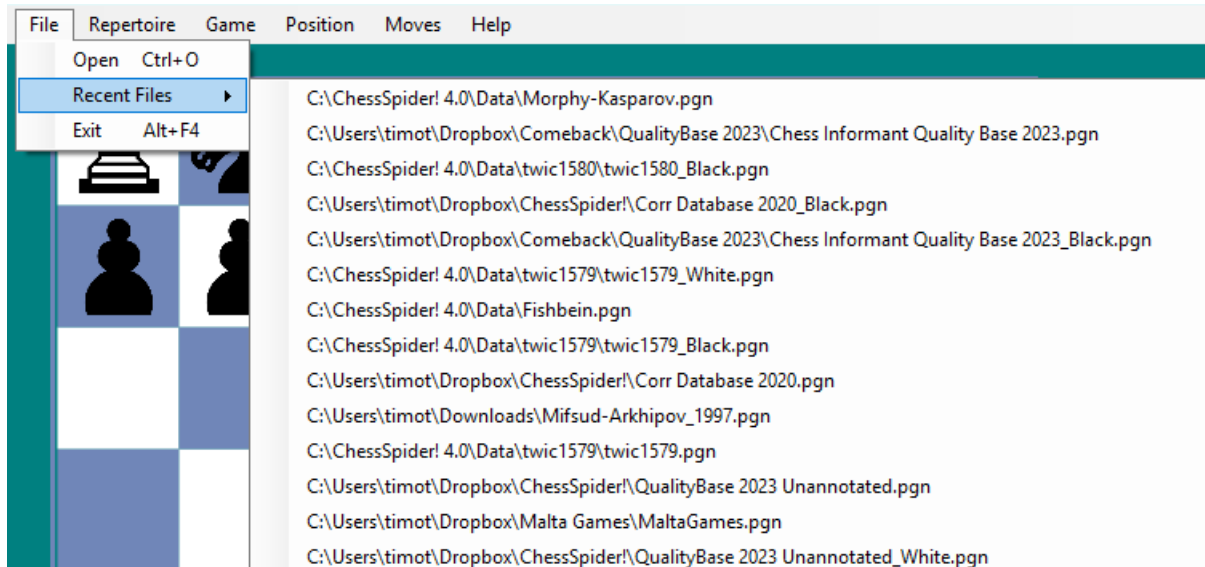


Figure 4: Recent file list

File > Exit

Saves the user's preferences (including last PGN file loaded, last game and move number viewed) and exits the program.

Repertoire > Go to Spider!

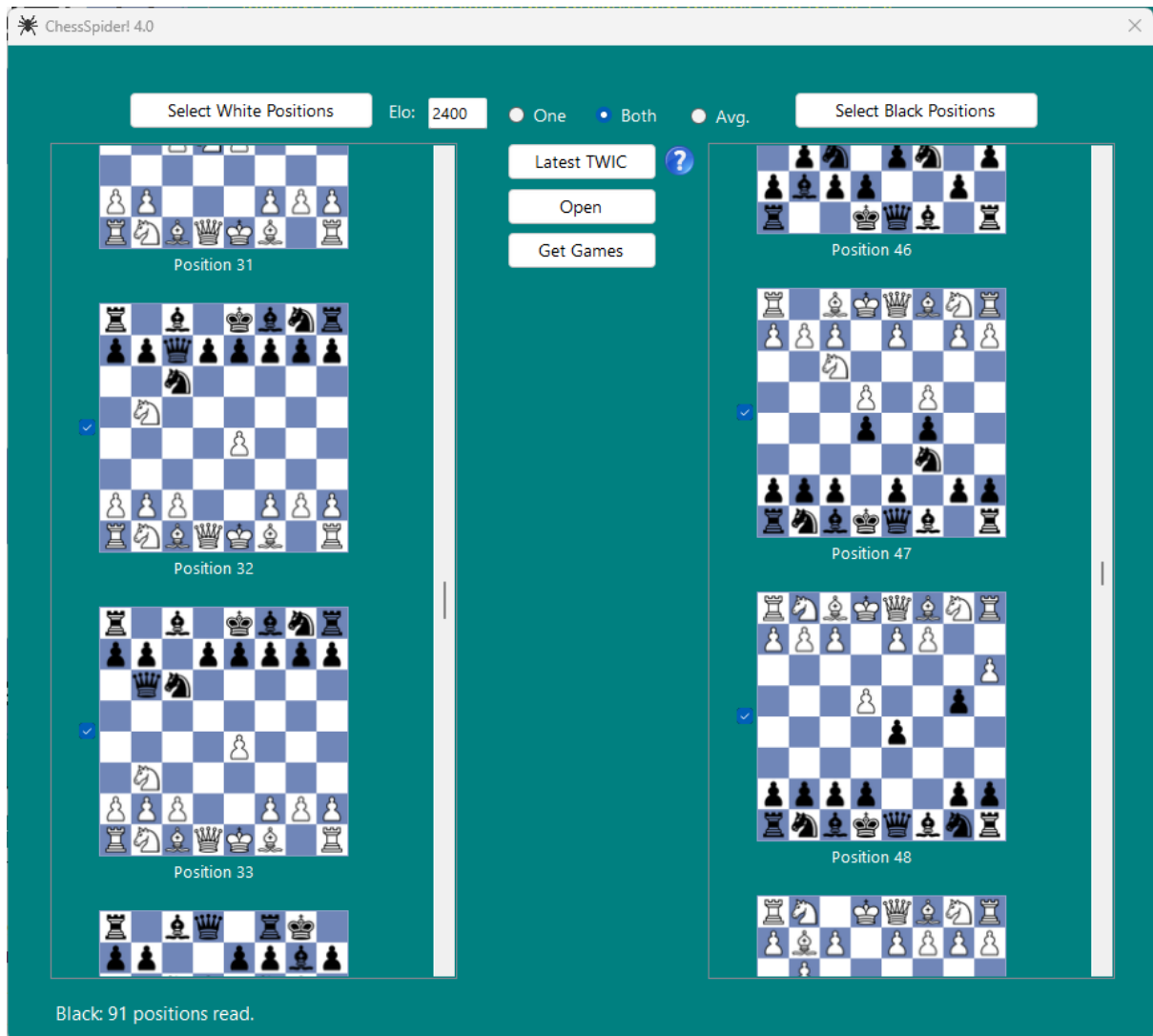


Figure 5: The Spider! window

This opens the Spider! Window. The user opens White and Black text files which denote the positions of their repertoire that they are interested in. These are displayed in two columns, one for the White repertoire positions, and one for the Black ones. The Black positions are seen from the Black perspective. If one wants to exclude some of the positions from the current search, they can do so by unchecking the check boxes next to the positions.

They then either open a PGN file and click on the *Get Games* button, or, alternatively, click on the *Latest TWIC* button, which filters the latest issue of *The Week in Chess*. In both cases, the respective PGN file is filtered by one's repertoire positions and the original file is suffixed with “_White” and “_Black” corresponding to the positions found.

Name	Date modified	Type	Size
twic1580.pgn	17/02/2025 23:33	PGN File	7,527 KB
twic1580_Black.pgn	18/02/2025 17:51	PGN File	65 KB
twic1580_White.pgn	18/02/2025 17:51	PGN File	60 KB

Figure 6: The Week in Chess in full and filtered

A prompt is shown to the user where they can open either of the White or Black files produced by the program, or view the containing folder in Windows Explorer.

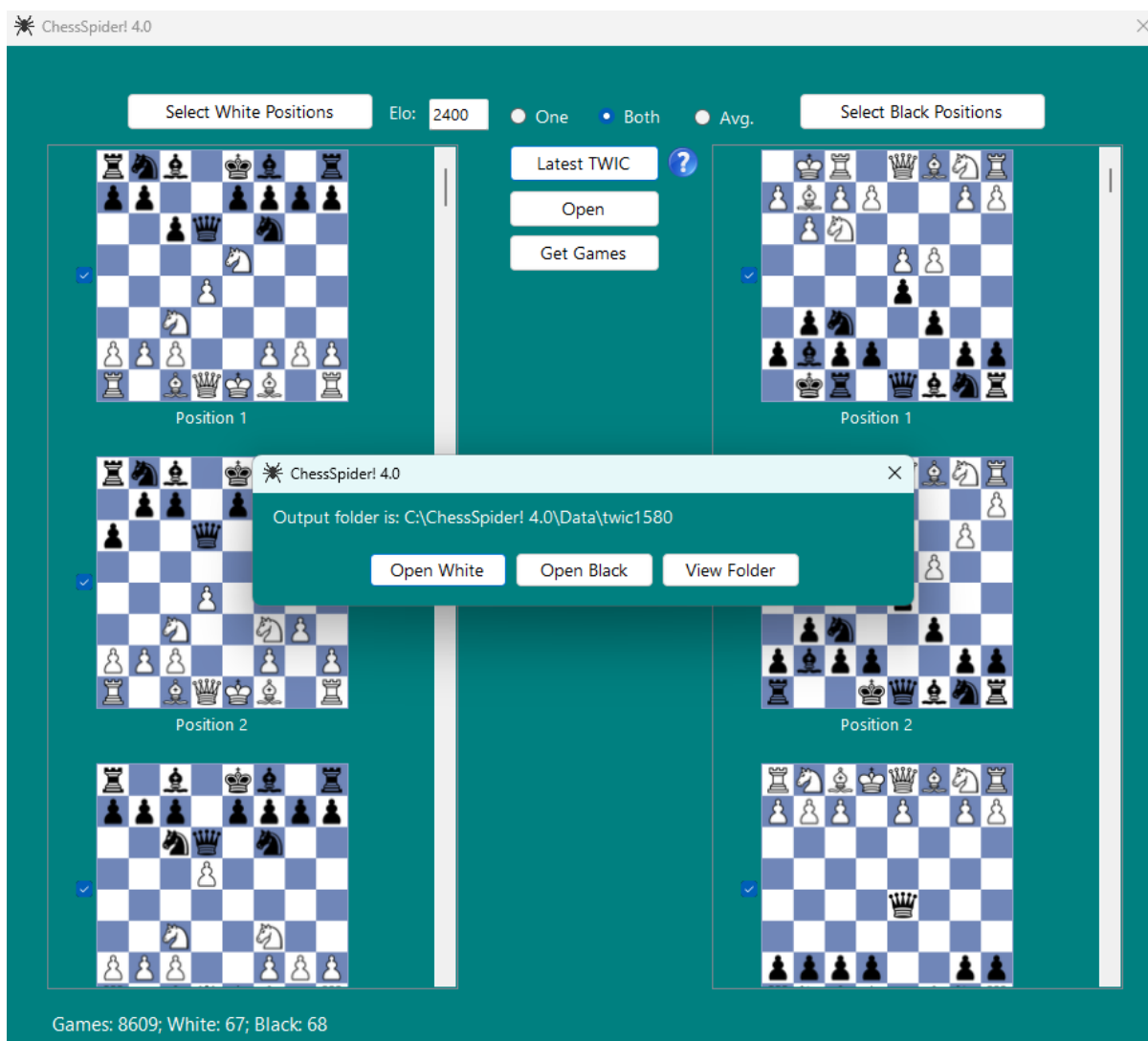


Figure 7: Post file-filtering options

One nicety is that if the user opens a black Repertoire file (indicated by the `_Black` suffix), the games are loaded from Black's perspective of the board. ChessSpider! "remembers" the last files used for the White and Black repertoire positions and automatically loads them on subsequent calls of this function. An Elo rating constraint can be specified (or left at 0 for all repertoire games to be

retrieved) for one or both players, or for their average rating.

Repertoire > Open Repertoire File

This option presents the user with a dialog from which they can select a .txt file containing their repertoire positions. Repertoire positions are entered either manually by typing moves in this file (for example, e4 c5 Nf3 a6 c4 or 1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 c6 4. e4) or added through the user interface invoked by the “Manage Repertoire” function, which we will see next.

Repertoire > Manage Repertoire File

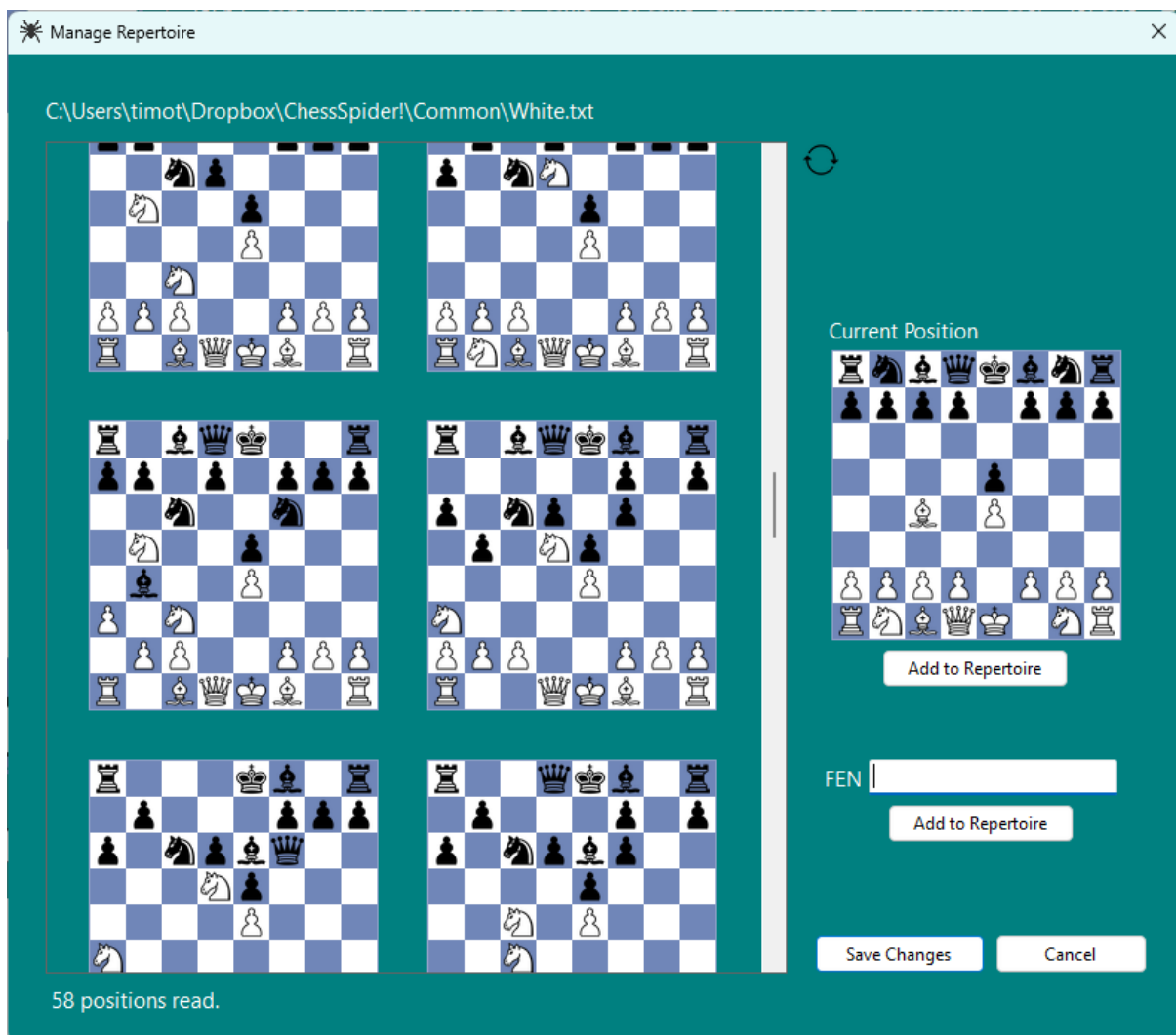


Figure 8: Manage Repertoire File

If a Repertoire file is opened by users, they can use this menu item to view or edit the positions that are contained in the current Repertoire file. The current board position may be added from here (and also by hitting F10 in the main screen) and the positions in the user’s file may be removed by clicking on any of the board diagrams. These positions reside in the program’s memory, but when the user is satisfied with their changes, they can click on the “Save Changes” button, and after confirmation their changes will be committed permanently. A FEN (*Forsyth-Edwards Notation*)

encoding of any position may be entered here, and, after clicking “Add to Repertoire” the position is rendered on the board. When saving positions to one’s repertoire from this graphical interface, any previous positions present in the user’s files will be changed to a hexadecimal representation of the positions, with the position saved as 64 characters (one for each square). New positions will be saved this way too.

Repertoire > Open and Manage Rep. File

As the name suggests, this function opens and calls the Repertoire Manager in one go. This saves time, but it is also useful if the user does not want to add repertoire positions immediately from the board positions, and, rather, wants to immediately edit their repertoire positions.

Repertoire > Create Repertoire File

Creates an empty repertoire file.

Repertoire > Copy Repertoire File

This functionality is useful when one wants to copy the currently opened .txt file (representing their repertoire positions) into another file. In this way, the originally opened file serves as a template for the copied file.

Repertoire > Open Rep. File Location

This is used to open Windows Explorer at the location of the currently open Repertoire file.

Game > Filter Games

Filter Games

Header Position Endgame

White: Anand Black: Kasparov

Ignore Colours

Event: Site: New York

White Elo: Min Max Year: 1995

Black Elo: Min Max Annotator:

ECO: B76 - Sicilian, Dragon, Yugoslav Attack - 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.f3

B76: 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3 O-O

Result: 1-0 0-1 1/2-1/2 Line

Complexity: Min 4000 Comments: Min 500

Search Reset Cancel

Figure 9: Filter Games by Header data

This is one of the backbones of ChessSpider! in that it allows one to search and filter out games based on several criteria. For example, they can enter data like White, Black, Event, Site, Annotator, Year, etc. and the system will retrieve the corresponding games.



Figure 10: Filter Games by Position

In the second tab the user can enter a position of choice. A FEN position can be entered here, too. Otherwise, the user can “pick up” pieces (or the blank square to remove other pieces) and drop them on the board where they can construct the required position. The *Game* button will bring the current board position in the main screen to this tab, where it can be searched for together with other filter criteria.

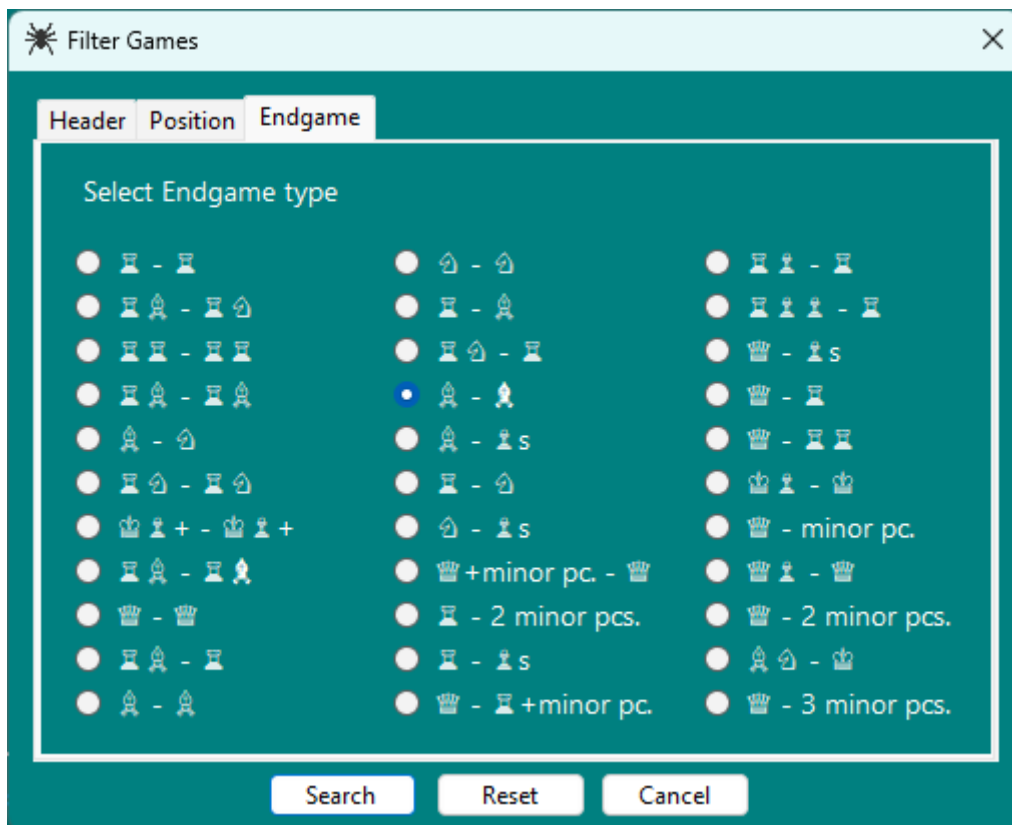


Figure 11: Filter Games by Endgame

An endgame search may also be run. The most common endgame types are shown and, for example, in the above screenshot, the user has selected the notorious opposite-coloured bishops' endgames.

Needless to say, these three search types (Header/Position/Endgame type) may be effectively combined so the user can drill down to the necessary games. The filter criteria the user enters, is recalled between subsequent visits to the Game Filter.

Game > Load Next Game

Loads the next game in the grid and refreshes the Notation panel with the new moves/annotations.

Game > Load Previous Game

Like the above, but here ChessSpider! will load the previous game.

Game > Load Random Game

Quite an interesting function! The program loads the first game whose game number is generated randomly.

Game > Get Current ECO

This is another useful function, and it filters the games of the current PGN file based on the ECO of the current game.

Game > Get Current White

Similar to the above, but gets the current White player's games, both with White and Black.

Game > Get Current Black

Gets the current game's Black player, and retrieves all the games of this player.

Game > Get Current Event

Searches for the current game's event in the open PGN file.

Game > Get Current Site

This finds all games where the site of the loaded game is encountered.

Game > Games Overview Mode

This menu item, which may also be invoked by clicking on the rightmost icon for any game in the games grid (or by conveniently hitting F8) shows the current game summarised in 12 diagrams, evenly spaced out according to move number. When the user selects this menu item they enter the “Overview mode”, and they can observe the positions of the game, together with highlighted squares that led to the positions in question. They can flip all boards by clicking on the relevant icon, and they can navigate to previous or next games (in the current data set) while in Overview mode. This gives the user the opportunity to quickly skim through the games of interest. Clicking on any of the 12 positions will close the Overview window, and load the selected game at the selected position.

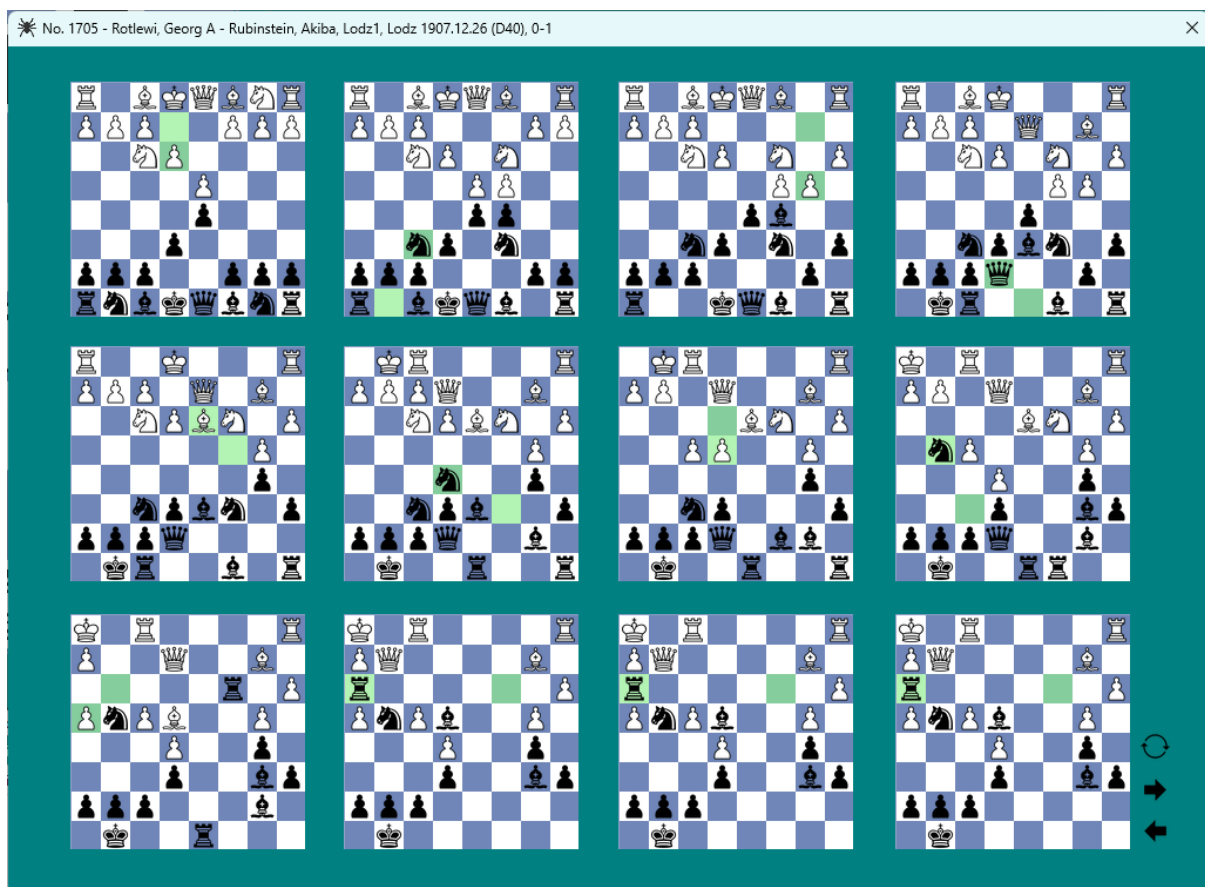


Figure 122: Games Overview Mode

Game > Export Games

Once the user filters some games, or even the whole PGN file, they can hit this button and the games in the grid will be exported to another PGN file of choice.

Position > Add to Repertoire File

This menu item takes the current board position and adds it to the open Repertoire file. This process can be repeated as many times as the user deems fit, and all the added positions can be found under the Repertoire Manager for the open Repertoire File.

Position > Find Position

The current board position is searched for throughout the current PGN file. The process is very fast in itself, but when used in conjunction with a header search, it is virtually instant.



Figure 13: Find board Position

Position > Rotate Board

Flips the board from White to Black perspective and vice-versa.

Position > Toggle Infinite Analysis

Toggles the state of the analysis engine, Stockfish 17.1. The inbuilt engine analyses the board position and displays three lines in descending order of evaluation. The engine's output can be seen in the engine panel to the right-hand side of the board.



Figure 14: Engine Analysis

Moves > Go to Start

Goes to the start of the game.

Moves > Go to End

Skips to the end of the currently loaded game.

Moves > Previous move in line

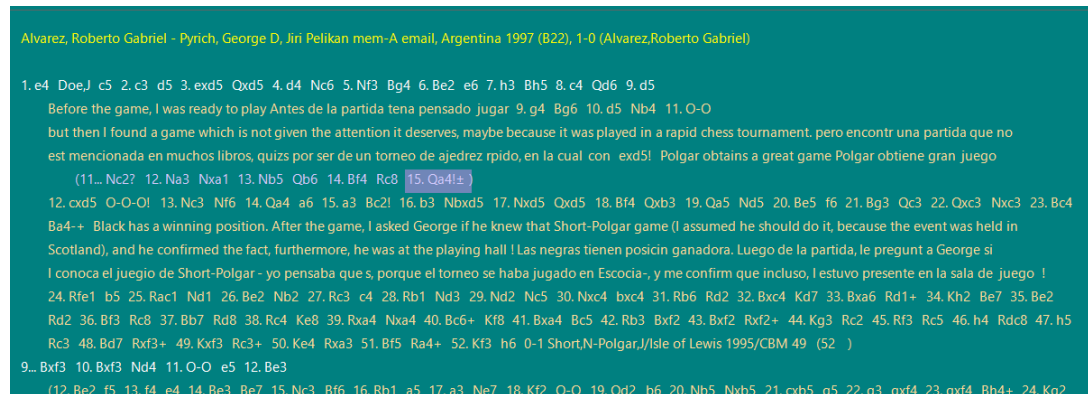


Figure 15: The Notation Panel

This is a useful function, as when a game is heavily annotated, the user can skip all variations of different depth (than the current) and just navigate through the moves of the current depth. Moves and comments are indented and colour coded in ChessSpider!'s notation panel so the user immediately gets an idea of how the game progresses. The current move is highlighted in the panel.

Moves > Next move in line

This allows one to navigate to the next move in the current depth of the game. The same as "Previous move in line" applies here too.

Moves > Enter previous variation

This enters the previous move, but irrespective of the depth the user is in. So, for example, if the user is in the main line of a game, and there is a variation at the previous move, clicking this menu item allows one to go to the previous move, without considering the current depth. This is useful when one wants to quickly look at sub-variations contained in the game.

Moves > Enter next variation

Goes to the next move, irrespective of depth. This is similar to the above.

Moves > Skip to last variation

Jumps to the start of the previous line in the same depth.

Moves > Skip to next variation

Skips to the start of the next line in the same depth.

Help > Help

Opens this file! 😊

Help > About

Displays a popup with a few details about the program.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can ChessSpider! help me prepare for my next opponent?

One can easily look at the games of their opponents by using the Header search in the Game filter or by hitting F5 and entering the relevant data in the first tab. If players want to find the White games of their opponent, they enter their name in the White text box, and alternatively for Black. If they want their opponent's games both as White and as Black (useful for when one wants to analyse their opponent's *style* of play), they can tick the "Ignore colours" option and the relevant games are found.

How do I study games from a particular opening?

If you know the ECO (*Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings*) code, this can easily be achieved in the Header search by utilising the ECO drop down. Here, each code is explained in terms of the name of the opening as well as the moves that represent it. This is an accurate way of getting the opening games desired although equally good is setting up a position in the Position tab (of the same Game Filter) before the branching variations occur, and searching for that position.

One must not forget to mention the Spider! functionality, where whole repertoires can be found at the click of one or two buttons. This is especially useful when one wants to keep abreast of new developments in their opening systems.

I want to look at Karpov's handling of Rook and bishop versus Rook and bishop of opposite colours. How can I do this?

In the Game Filter, under the White player enter "Karpov" and check the "Ignore Colours" option so that both Karpov's white and black games are obtained.

Filter Games

Header Position Endgame

White: Karpov Black:

Event: Site:

White Elo: Min Max Year:

Black Elo: Min Max Annotator:

ECO:

Result: 1-0 0-1 1/2-1/2 Line

Complexity: Min 4000 Comments: Min 500

Search Reset Cancel

Figure 16: Karpov's Rook and opposite-coloured Bishops' Endgames (1)

Then, hop over to the “Endgame” tab, and select the eighth option in the leftmost column of endgame types.

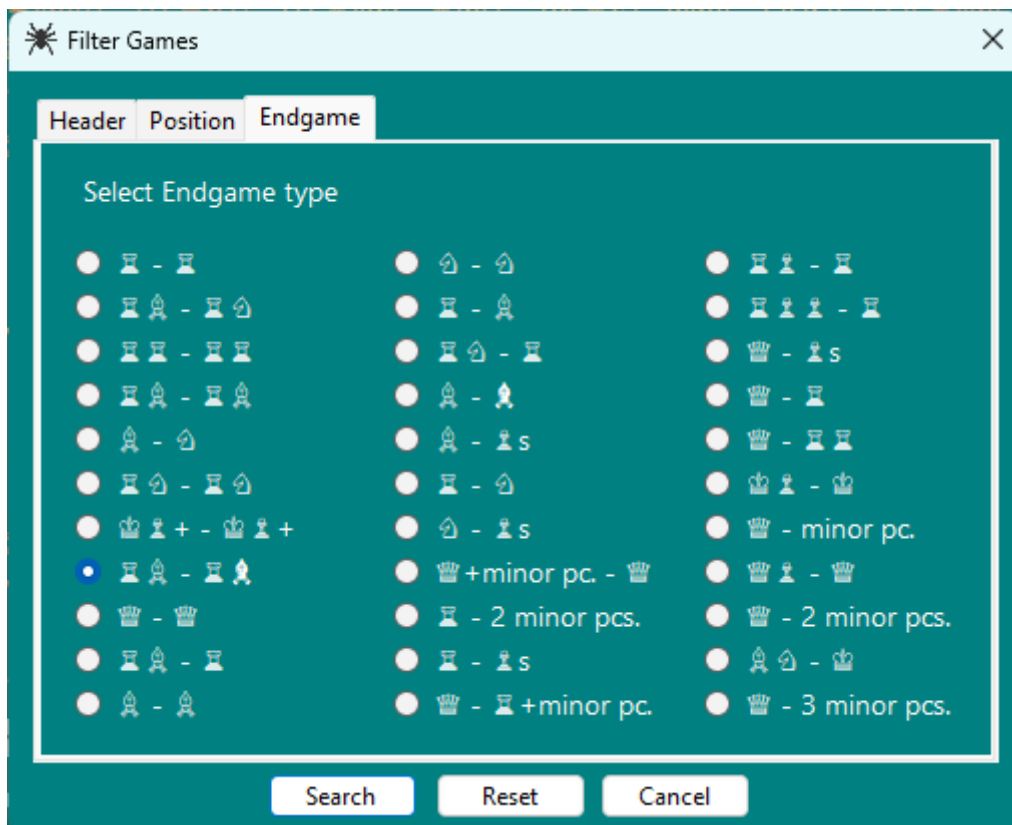


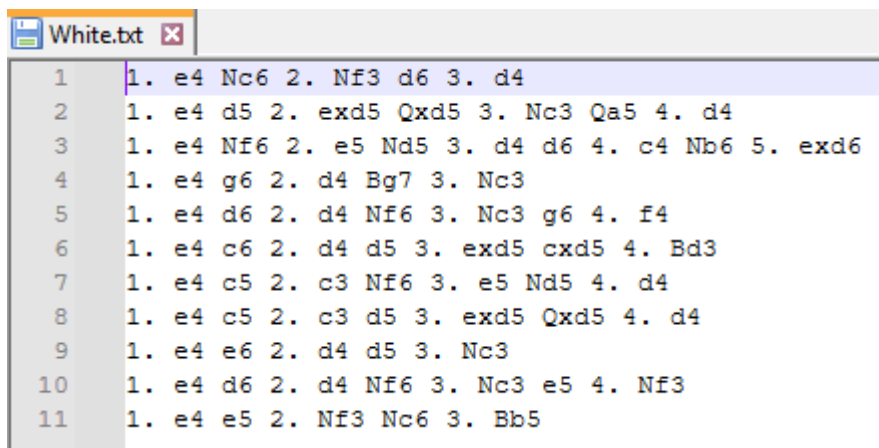
Figure 17: Karpov's Rook and opposite-coloured Bishops' Endgames (2)

Click on "Search" and these games will be found. Obviously, one presumes that the PGN file opened has such games available.

How do I quickly add positions to my Repertoire File?

There are two ways to achieve this. The first way, used in the previous versions of ChessSpider!, is simply to enter the moves that lead to the position of interest in any text file (.txt). So, for example, one may enter the moves:

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. exd5 cxd5 4. c4 for the Caro-Kann Panov-Botvinnik System (this is obviously a simplified example). Move numbers may or may not be omitted.



```
White.txt
1 1. e4 Nc6 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4
2 1. e4 d5 2. exd5 Qxd5 3. Nc3 Qa5 4. d4
3 1. e4 Nf6 2. e5 Nd5 3. d4 d6 4. c4 Nb6 5. exd6
4 1. e4 g6 2. d4 Bg7 3. Nc3
5 1. e4 d6 2. d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 g6 4. f4
6 1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. exd5 cxd5 4. Bd3
7 1. e4 c5 2. c3 Nf6 3. e5 Nd5 4. d4
8 1. e4 c5 2. c3 d5 3. exd5 Qxd5 4. d4
9 1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3
10 1. e4 d6 2. d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 e5 4. Nf3
11 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5
```

Figure 18: One way of entering positions in a Repertoire File

The second way is to add positions from games. Say, one is looking at a game and they find a position which interests them, they can simply hit F10 (or if they prefer, use the relevant menu item) and it will be added to the current Repertoire File.

Can I copy one of my Repertoire files through the program, and amend it without affecting the original file?

Yes, this is very easily done. One opens the source Repertoire File through the menu Repertoire > Open Repertoire File, then clicks on Repertoire > Copy Repertoire File. ChessSpider! asks for a destination file name, and the original file will be copied to the destination. New changes will not affect the original file.

I am looking at a game and I find the opening particularly interesting. How can I quickly get similar games of the same opening?

This can be achieved by clicking the menu item Game > Get Current ECO, and the ECO games which match the current ECO will be displayed.

All these cases obviously assume that one has a PGN file which contains such games that the user wants to find!

I have just filtered out 150 games from a large PGN file, and I do not want to lose them when I close the program. Can I somehow maintain them permanently?

One can use the Game > Export games functionality and the games currently present in the games list are exported to a new PGN file selected by the user. The newly exported file may then be opened separately, and the original search results are maintained.

I was casually looking through the game Kasparov – Shirov, from Horgen 1994, and I was intrigued by Kasparov’s exchange sacrifice on move 17. I wanted to see if the position before 17. Rxb7 had occurred before, or if it has occurred ever since. Is this possible to do?

If one navigates to the position before 17. Rxb7 and clicks on the “lens” icon underneath the board (or uses the menu Position > Find Position or hits F12), such games in the PGN file currently open will be found, if any.



Figure 19: Kasparov - Shirov, Horgen, 1994. Position before 17. Rxb7

Where are the downloaded TWICs located?

Any weekly updates from The Week in Chess are downloaded in full and filtered out in the **Data** folder relative to the program’s path. One can also find there a free PGN file of the complete games of all World Champions from the first unofficial World Champion, Paul Morphy, to the 13th World Champion, Garry Kasparov. This is the default file which is opened when ChessSpider! is run the first time.

Useful keyboard shortcuts

File > Open	CTRL + O
File > Exit	ALT + F4
Repertoire > Go to Spider!	CTRL + S
Repertoire > Open Repertoire File	CTRL + R
Repertoire > Manage Repertoire File	CTRL + M
Repertoire > Open and Manage Rep. File	CTRL + ALT + M
Repertoire > Create Repertoire File	Insert
Repertoire > Copy Repertoire File	CTRL + C
Repertoire > Open Rep. File Location	CTRL + L
Game > Filter Games	F5
Game > Load Next Game	F7
Game > Load Previous Game	F6
Game > Load Random Game	CTRL + ALT + R
Game > Get Current ECO	CTRL + ALT + E
Game > Get Current White	CTRL + ALT + W
Game > Get Current Black	CTRL + ALT + B
Game > Get Current Event	CTRL + ALT + V
Game > Get Current Site	CTRL + ALT + S
Game > Games Overview Mode	F8
Game > Export Games	ALT + E
Position > Add to Repertoire File	F10
Position > Find Position	F12
Position > Rotate Board	CTRL + F
Position > Toggle Infinite Analysis	CTRL + ALT + A
Go to Start	Home
Go to End	End
Previous move in line	Left
Next move in line	Right
Enter previous variation	Up
Enter next variation	Down
Skip to last variation	Page up
Skip to next variation	Page down
Go to line (after entering line number)	ENTER
Clear current search criteria	ESC