



COLUMNISTS

ChessBase Cafe

Mig Greengard



Daily Chores

Since the much-anticipated Fritz 9 has yet to be widely distribute in the English-speaking world I'm going to hold off on covering its new features. Plus, if our use of chess software is anything like the settings on our digital cameras, there are plenty of features in the current versions to keep us busy.

For some of us, using chess software is as routine as taking out the trash and mowing the lawn. Not that my Brooklyn apartment has a lawn, but I've seen them on TV and they always seem to need mowing. The number of people who use ChessBase and Fritz to make a living has to be a very small percentage of users, but they have routines that everyone can learn from.

It would probably be distressing if I knew how much time I spend using ChessBase, which is why I'm glad it only rarely pops up with a message telling you how many times you've launched it. Apart from playing over new downloaded games from tournaments almost every day, there's online blitz, which I've pretty much sworn off while I'm on deadline. (I know at least one GM whose wife deleted his online playing software when he couldn't break his addiction voluntarily. I think he was missing something unimportant like seeing his children learn to walk and talk.)

One of the unsung little improvements with ChessBase 9 is the way it handles downloaded game files, although it can be a little unpredictable. When you click on a PGN link it launches the game list and automatically adds an icon to the My Databases list. If you are using a browser other than Internet Explorer, such as Firefox or Mozilla, this might be different depending on other factors like the server being used by the website. You may end up with the PGN file appearing as text in the browser window instead of downloading. In that case, right-click the link and save the link target to download the file.

Downloading the file that way is often a better idea anyway, unless you are going to quickly move the games to another file. This is because if you click on a link directly, the file that opens in ChessBase will be saved in your browser's temporary (TEMP) directory. This means it could disappear at any moment, so be careful. I get support mail about disappearing databases and this is always the problem. Your browser cache cleans itself out regularly, taking downloaded files with it. So save the database individually or move the games to another database if you want to keep them.

Path
..\ChessBase\NoGames\ClipDBs\CBMain.cli
C:\DOCUME~1\ \LOCALS~1\TEMP\wchfide05-1.pgn
C:\DOCUME~1\ \LOCALS~1\TEMP\wchfide05.pgn
C:\Data\Chessjunk\Events\05SanLuis\wchfideu05.pgn
C:\Data\Work\ChessNinja\Web\whitebelt\149\wb149all.cbh

Therefore, it's good to keep a few databases to dump new games into in case we want to add notes or save them for later. If I'm working on tournament reports, I usually keep two databases, one with annotations and the other without so I can quickly make PGN files for download. The other working files often end up with multiple copies of the same game, which sounds strange at first, but this can be handy if you don't want to mix computer analysis with your own notes, for example.

It's also good to have a working database for automated analysis if you need to work with one database while the computer works on another one. Admittedly, few people are going to need to analyze in such a rush. But more than once I've set Fritz to work auto-analyzing a bunch of games so I can look at them later and accidentally had the same database open in ChessBase. This causes a "cannot save" error in Fritz, so if you have both programs open make sure you don't have the same database in focus in ChessBase before having Fritz work on an overnight project that is going to hang after the first game.

Doing things the slow but certain way can be tempting if we don't have a documented recipe for doing things the supposedly fast way. When readers send games in to be analyzed for my newsletters they often add plenty of their own notes. Their notes have to be distinguished from mine, so the reader's name and mine have to be added to each comment, which is laborious and easy to forget.

Merging threatens to solve this chore by automatically adding the name of the commentator of the imported game to each comment and variation. I make an unannotated copy of the game, add my notes, and then merge the two; making sure both games have the "annotator" field filled in. Then I can go back and add replies and such. This won't add my name to all of my comments, unfortunately, but this could be done by creating a third copy of the game and repeating the process and then merging the second and third. On occasion I've seen notes disappear when merged with games that have comments on the same move although this is rare. Just be sure to double check.

If you are putting together sets of useful games and positions to analyze or share, it's handy to crop the game to the relevant position. This makes it faster to zip through them with the F10 key since each game starts at the key position. The bracket keys chop moves away on either side of the position.

There's a neat trick if you want to keep the whole gamescore and still be able to jump to key positions without using training notation. Insert a diagram at the right position (this trick only works with one spot in each game, which is why

there should be a sort of “bookmark” ability to make it easy to jump from one to the next). Then run a search in the database of games with diagrams in the key position. On the “annotations” tab of the game filter, type “diagram” into the text1 field. This will find all the games where you inserted diagrams, and when you open one it will jump to the position a move before the diagram, even if it’s in the sub-variations.

The E-mailbag

Question We use ChessBase 9.0 for opening analysis and will often get Fritz 5.32’s opinion on a position. I assume we would be able to use Fritz 9 within ChessBase, please correct me if I’m wrong, but would its analysis be superior? I am looking forward to your column. **Brett (USA)**

Answer The short answer is yes, Fritz 9 provides analysis that is superior in just about every way to that provided by Fritz 5.32 (never one of my favorite engines). Each version is stronger and smarter than the last, and Fritz 9 in particular makes great progress in playing a more positional, smarter type of chess.

It’s worth taking a grain of salt with any computer analysis, however, especially in the opening. Where tactics and blunders are concerned, Fritz is a wonder. It finds spectacular attacks and subtle ways to nab pawns and amazing ways to open a position. The openings as humans study them are a different thing altogether.

While I wouldn’t expect to see a serious blunder from any program, they don’t really understand the positional concepts essential in the openings. Pawn play and long-term planning based on where the pieces should go early are critical and the best plans have been developed over centuries. This is why machines are dependent on their opening databases – and why databases are better for training – without which they play the opening moves without any subtlety. Turn off the opening book to see what I mean. 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 and Junior 9 suggests 3...h6 and 3...Qf6 as its top two suggestions. Fritz 8 lists 3...Bc5, 3...Be7, and the lovely 3...Bd6 as about the same quality. Oy.

Of course master-level opening analysis is usually a different thing, closer to the middlegame. Grandmasters like to set their machines to work breaking down hyper-complex positions in the Najdorf and such. As Evgeny Bareev put it, tongue only halfway in cheek, “we don’t find the novelties, Fritz does.”

Question I have a question relating to the installation of Fritz when you have purchased other engines. I have Fritz 8, Shredder 9 and Junior 9. The objective is to use the Fritz interface with the idea of selecting different engines. The problem is that when I run Fritz up pops Deep Junior 9 (which I don’t own) and the Shredder engine. Clearly, with Fritz 9 imminent maybe my questions are moot, but I would be interested in your opinion on the subject. How should

I install each program as the default is to overwrite each other? Regards, **Jon Eckert (England)**

Answer Installing multiple programs doesn't overwrite anything. The interface is the same for all the Fritz 8 family programs. It just picks the most recently installed one to show when you launch the program. The engine, book, database, and 3D boards are the only separate things and those are all untouched. You can even chose what it shows when you launch.

All the programs of the same Fritz family generation will "push aside" a previous program. It does this to make sure you're getting the newest version of the interface and so your Playchess.com account details aren't erased. Since the interface is the same, only the engine really matters. It just changes the name when you load the program.

Any interface updates are soon rendered irrelevant since you can install the latest version online by logging into Playchess and going to the Help menu. Note that after you enter the program you can switch to a different interface version by going to Tools - Options and the Version tab. Make the change in the "GUI Version" drop-down. You probably won't notice any difference other than the different screen at launch.

The engine that loads when you launch is whichever you were using last in the program. You can change it under the Engine menu. Getting the Junior 9 screen if you don't have it is probably a bug from an online upgrade. That was the latest version and they probably forgot to remove the launch screen from the online update. But no harm done and you can change it as described above. The online upgrade does nothing to the engines unless there are bug fixes. There is only one universal update for the Fritz family of programs, not a separate one for each program you have.

Question I have a difficult question on which I haven't found any answer on the net and from ChessBase: How do you activate the chess media recorder function in Fritz 8 or in ChessBase to create your own chess media presentations? I'm a trainer in my club and this function would be a great tool for me. – **Lahcène Chemali (France)**

Answer Yep, this has been a big debate, whether or not to make the media encoding software freely available, sell it, give it only to approved providers and control distribution, or keep it tightly under control. Right now it is inaccessible to the public, but this may change. Having a million lessons out there for free on the Internet wouldn't so much be a problem as the proliferation of really *bad* lessons. If people see free ones that aren't good they may not want to buy the professional ones. At least that's one argument. (And if the free ones are too good people might not want to buy the professional ones either!)

All the ChessBase software described by Mig in this column, as well as many more ChessBase programs, are available in the [ChessCafe Online Catalog](#).

Mig wants your questions!! Send it along and perhaps it will be answered in an upcoming column. Please include your name and country of residence. [Yes, I have a question for Mig!](#)



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