



COLUMNISTS

## ChessBase Cafe

Steve Lopez



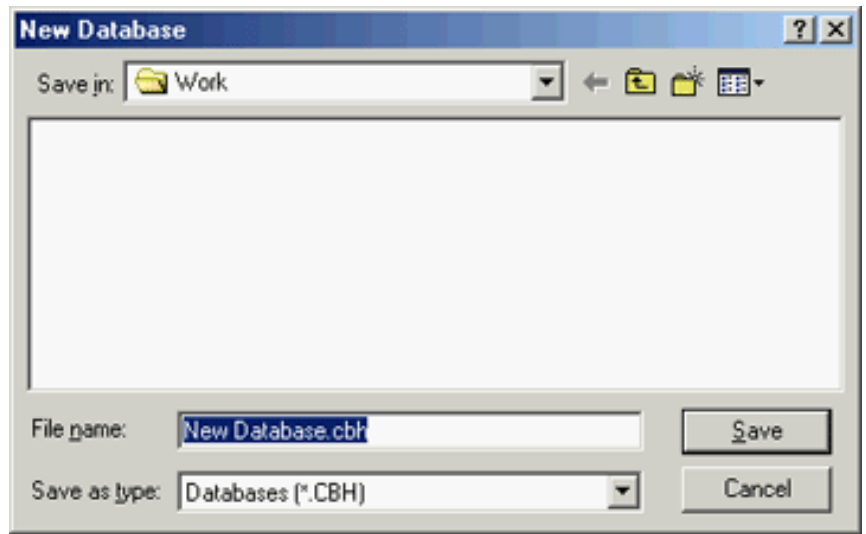
## Building a Personal Database in *Fritz 9*: Part One

Being a ChessBase columnist gives one a unique perspective on the software's use, as I'm always looking for new things to write about. However, I occasionally forget that there are many new users just starting out, and they are looking for tips on some of the basic uses of the software that I tend to take for granted. I was reminded of this by a few recent e-mails requesting advice on building a personal database with *Fritz9*.

In discussing a "personal database," we're going to discuss building a database of *our own games*, be they casual, club, or serious tournament games. The exact source doesn't matter to the procedure – the steps are the same. We're going to start from square one and show you how to create a database, manually enter the moves of a game, and save the game into the new database. In next month's column, we'll discuss some handy indexing tools you can use within your database.

The first step (after you've launched *Fritz9*, obviously) is to create a new database. Once you've reached the main chessboard screen of *Fritz*, press F12 to go to the database/game list window. I'll be using these terms more or less interchangeably. Or else go to the File menu, select "Open," and then "Database" from the submenu; either procedure will get you to the game list window. You'll see the game list from the last database you used.

Here's where you'll create a brand new database. Go to the File menu in the game list window, select "New," and then "Database" from the submenu. You'll see the following dialogue appear:

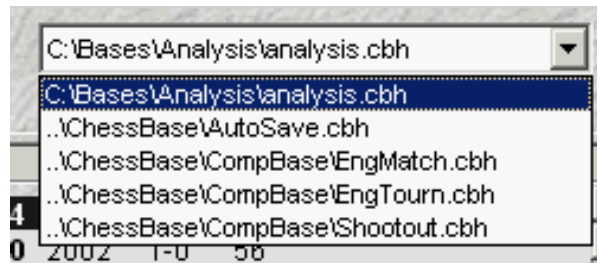


If you've used *Windows* for more than, say, an hour or so, this should be familiar to you – it's the standard *Windows* File Select dialogue. This is where you'll select a folder into which to save the database and name the database file itself. If you're not familiar with the dialogue, consult the *Windows* Help file, which can instruct you in its use.

You can save the database into any folder you like or even create a new one. *Fritz* can access databases in any folder or on any drive. The default folder is [drive letter]:\My Documents\ChessBase\Database\Work. The important thing is to remember the location of the database. Even though *Windows* provides tools that will allow you to search for a file, it's always a good idea to be organized. It's OK to use the default location if you wish, just as long as you can remember it, should the need arise.

After you've selected or created a folder for your database, you'll need to name your database. You'll notice in the "File name" box that *Fritz* has provided a default name of "New Database.cbh"; you'll *definitely* want to change this to something more significant and identifiable. It doesn't need to be anything elaborate. My first personal database (which I still use today, nearly fifteen years later) is called "My Games.cbh." It's not a fancy name, but it does the job. Just type in the name you've chosen and then click the "Save" button.

You'll see the database window's display change to an empty database – empty, of course, because you have not added any games to it yet. Before we proceed, we should note that the upper right-hand corner of the game list window contains a pull-down menu of your most recently used databases and the name of your new database should be shown in the display. Unless you only have a few games to input, you probably won't be entering your entire collection of games in one sitting. If you should need to use some other databases in the meantime, you can use this pull-down menu to select your personal database when you're ready to come back to it.



If you use several databases between sessions with your personal one, you might find that it's no longer listed in the pull-down menu. In this case, you'll open your personal database by going to the File menu, selecting "Open," and then "Database" from the submenu. You'll again be greeted by the *Windows* File Select dialogue, which you'll use to navigate to the folder where you stored your personal database, and then select it from the list. This is why I stressed knowing how to use the File Select dialogue and remembering the location of the folder where you stored your personal database.

By the way, there's no reason why you can't maintain multiple personal databases. I prefer to keep my personal games segregated into numerous categories. I keep one database for my rated over-the-board tournament games in a "raw" form – just the moves with perhaps a few brief annotations – and a second database containing the same games analyzed by various chess engines. I have another database for my casual "skittles" games, several others for my correspondence games (one for each league or website), and yet another for the games I play against computer programs. There are no ironclad rules here; any method you prefer will do just fine.

After you've created a new empty database, it's time to start entering the moves and saving your games. Grab your stack of gamescores (or your spiral-bound tournament scoresheets) and get ready to start preserving your games. Return to the main chessboard screen of *Fritz* by clicking on the appropriate button on your *Windows* taskbar.

This next step is *very* important and *cannot* be omitted: you have to turn off *Fritz*' chess engine before you begin entering moves, otherwise the program will respond as if you were playing a game against it. Go to the Engine menu at the top of the screen and select "Switch off engine." If you've done this properly you can return to the Engine menu and see a check mark to the immediate left of that command.

Next you'll go to the File menu, select "New," and then one of the game types (such as "Blitz game" or "Long game") from the submenu. Either of these two choices will do nicely, since you're not going to be playing an actual game anyway. Just click "OK" when the dialogue for setting the times appears. Double-check the Engine dialogue at this point, as it may be necessary to switch off the engine again in case *Fritz* has turned it back on.

Now you can start entering the moves. You have two ways to do this. The first is to grab a piece or pawn with your mouse and move it to the destination square. A somewhat quicker method is the “two-click” process: click once on the moving piece and then click once on the destination square. You can even reverse the order by clicking on the destination square first, followed by clicking on the piece. As you make moves on the board, you’ll see the notation for them appear in the Notation pane on the screen.

If you make a mistake as you’re entering the moves, you can click the VCR button, which looks like a curved red arrow directly below the board (if you’ve chosen to display the VCR controls). This takes back the move and allows you to enter another. Alternatively, you can click on the previous move in the Notation pane, enter the correct move, and select “Overwrite” in the popup dialogue, which overwrites the incorrect move with the newly-entered one.

If you find much later on in the game that a previous move was incorrect, you can still fix it, albeit with potentially a bit more work. Click on the move immediately preceding the wrong one in the Notation pane, then make the correct move. When the popup dialogue appears click on the “Insert” button; this will replace the incorrect move with the correct one *while attempting to preserve as many of the subsequent moves as it is able*. In many cases, you’ll see no change to your gamescore, but in some cases the game will be cutoff if a discrepancy in the gamescore occurs. You’ll need to reenter the subsequent moves from that point, which is why I said there might potentially be a bit more work involved.

After you’ve finished entering the moves, it’s time to save your game. Go to the File menu and select the “Save” command. A dialogue will appear, into which you’ll enter the header information for your game. This dictates how the game will appear in the database’s game list.

The default values in this dialogue will include your name and the name of the engine you currently have loaded. Just change this information to match the game you just entered. For the white player, type the player's last name in the left-hand box after "White" and his/her first name or initial into the right-hand box after "White." Do the same for the Black player in the boxes provided. For "Tournament" you can simply type in the town where the game was played or you can click the "Details" box to see a more exhaustive and elaborate set of fields to fill out. (For games against computers, I use the "Tournament" field to enter any time controls or handicap settings that were in effect for the game).

The "ECO" field will already be filled in with the proper *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings* code for the opening, but be aware that if the entry doesn't look right to you, it's likely because a transposition into another opening occurred during your game. You can also enter the Elo ratings for the players and the round number for tournament games if you desire. Don't forget to enter the game's result: "1-0" indicates a White win, "0-1" means Black won, and "1/2-1/2" means the game was drawn. You can also enter the exact date or just the year. Finally you can click the "Annotator and Teams" tab, if you're entering a game from a team tournament or have added some comments and wish your name to appear in the "Annotator" field.

Bear in mind that you don't have to enter every single bit of information; it's not a requirement to fill in *all* of the fields. Just remember that it's best to include enough information to be able to readily identify the game and make it searchable using the Search mask later. However, the more information you can provide, the better it is.

After you've finished filling out the header info, click the "OK" button to save the game into your new database. If you click on the button for the game list window on your *Windows* taskbar, you'll see the game's header information appear as a new game on your list.

Then you just repeat the process for all of your games. As you save additional games, new ones will always appear last in the game list (i.e. at the bottom of the list). You can't "insert" games into the middle of a database, so it's important to arrange your stack of gamescores chronologically before you start manually inputting them.

All of this sounds like a lot of work and, realistically, it is. But you'll get faster with practice. I've been banging games into databases for years and I'm at a point where I can enter and save a forty to sixty move game in about five minutes or less.

Next month we'll look at more things to do with your database after you've created it. But before we depart, I'll leave you with some extra shortcuts and tips that you might find useful:

- **Sound** – if the “board sounds” of the pieces moving annoy you while entering a game, go to the “Tools” menu, select “Options,” and, after the dialogue appears, click the “Multimedia” tab and uncheck “Board sounds.”
- **Automatic board flipping** – If Fritz is flipping the board between games (setting up every other game with the black pieces at the bottom of the board), you can turn this off. Go to the “Tools” menu, select “Options,” and, after the dialogue appears, click the “Game” tab and uncheck “Flip board on new game.”
- **Manual board flipping** – if you want to switch colors (say, you played Black in the game and want the black pieces at the bottom of the chessboard), hit CTRL-F on your keyboard or go to the View menu and select “Flip board.”
- **Rapid opening input** – if you have an opening book loaded, click on the “Openings book” tab in the Notation pane and just click on moves from the list until you run out of “book” moves, then input the rest of the moves on the chessboard.

Until next month, have fun!

---

© 2006, Steven A. Lopez. All rights reserved.

---

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

---

***Steve 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 Steve!](#)***

---



[TOP OF PAGE](#)



[HOME](#)



[COLUMNS](#)



[LINKS](#)



[ARCHIVES](#)



[ABOUT THE  
CHESS CAFE](#)

[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)  
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)  
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe.com\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2006 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"**The Chess Cafe®**" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.