

Novag UCB DLL driver

by Graham O'Neill

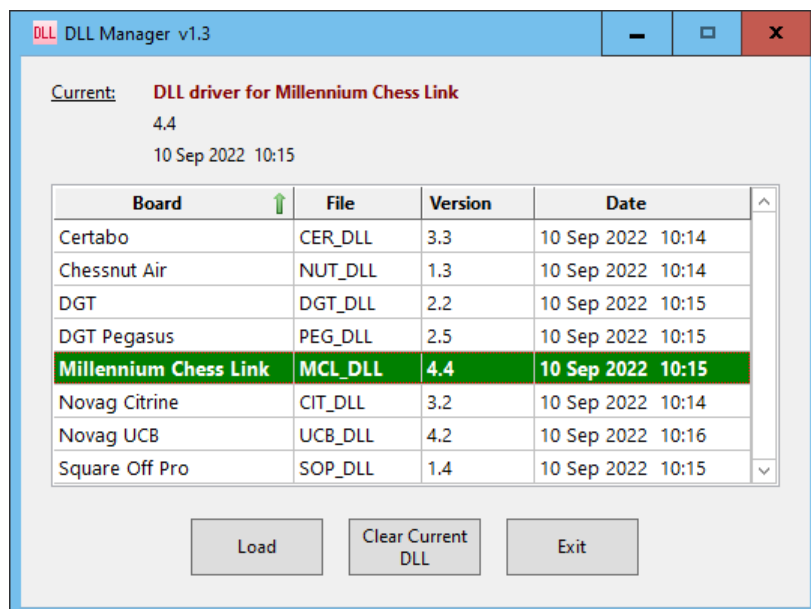
1. Installation

1.1 Windows

For Fritz and ChessBase the driver is 64 bit, which means it will only run in Fritz version 15 and above, and ChessBase 13 and above.

Download and run the setupUCB.exe program and it will lead you through installing the files (UCB_DLL.dll and gon-UCB4.dll) for the required programs. The setup program doesn't install for LucasChess as the drivers are already included in that program's download.

For Arena, ChessBase, Fritz and Shredder the setup program will also install programs to allow you to select which board to use if you have multiple boards. For example, for Arena this is called "Arena eBoard" and will show you the screen:



Which boards are listed depends on which drivers you have installed. The top of the screen shows which driver is currently selected (Millennium Chess Link in the above picture). In the list you can choose a different driver and then click [Load](#) to select it as the current driver. The option to [Clear Current Driver](#) allows you to revert to the DGT Rabbit Plugin if you have that installed for your DGT board. You do not need to install Rabbit for my drivers.

1.2 Linux

The only GUI that currently uses my driver is LucasChess and that already has it installed.

My program uses Pascal and Qt6 which might not work on your PC initially. If you find that the driver doesn't load at all then install the Pascal/Qt6 support library by running:

Debian (Trixie and later) & Ubuntu (24.04 and later): `sudo apt install libqt6pas6`
Fedora & RHEL-based Systems (Rocky, AlmaLinux): `sudo dnf install libqt6pas`
Arch Linux & Manjaro: `sudo pacman -S qt6pas`

If your distro can't find a libqt6pas6, libqt6pas or qt6pas library then you will need to download and install it manually using the file from David Bannon's GitHub files. You do not need to install the -dev or -devel versions.

<https://github.com/davidbannon/libqt6pas/releases>

You will probably also have to grant your user name access to the serial ports using either `chmod` to grant RW access or by editing the `\etc` group file with `sudo gedit group`.

2. General information

Sometimes the system won't release the COM port even though my driver has finished and this will stop you from reconnecting the board again. In this case the easiest solution is to unplug the board's USB connection at the computer and plug it back in again.

My driver screen cannot be closed using the normal close window button as that would leave the GUI without the response it is expecting. Normally it will close automatically when you complete the required action but if you need to force it to close (perhaps the driver keeps failing to talk to the board) then you need to do this by deactivating the board in the GUI.

2.1 Configuration screen

The first time you access my DLL file you will be prompted to set some configuration details to tell my driver how to connect to and use the board.

UCB version

I found older programs for the UCB that contained different versions of commands to those that worked on my board. Those commands will be used if you set this option to 1. If you set this option to 2 then the commands will be those as used and tested with my board. If you find the board sometimes stops working and flashes unusual sets of LEDs then try changing this option.

Connection

The COM port that your board is connected to. You can find this in the Ports section of Device Manager in Windows (C:\Windows\System32\devmgmt.msc).

The configuration data will be stored in a file called UCB_DLL.INI which will be in the same folder as the DLL file, unless that is in the "Program Files" directory in which case it will be your C:\Users folder. You can edit this file manually but must use a text editor like Notepad rather than a word processor like Word.

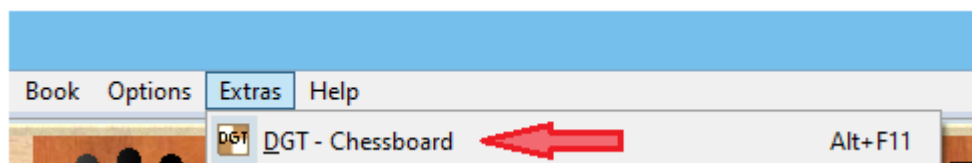
3. Use with Arena

A problem with Arena is that it never sends actual positions to the driver, so it isn't possible to start a game from a position other than the normal starting position.

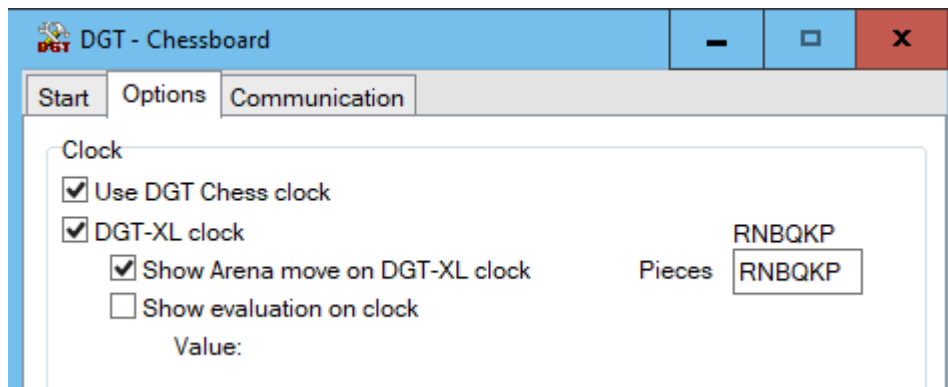
3.1 Playing an engine

In *Engines > Manage* select the engine you want to play against and in *Levels* set the time control to be used. Select *File > New* to start a new game.

Connect the board to your computer, set up the pieces and activate the board using *Extras > DGT - Chessboard*:



The first time you do this you must go to the *Options* tab of the screen that appears and set the details as shown here:



Set up the configuration details in my driver if required.

You can now make the first move as white, or click [Game > Move Now!](#) to make the computer play the first move. After that make moves on the board and they will appear on the Arena screen.

If you want to play a new game use [File > New](#) again.

3.2 Take back moves

If you want to take back a move wait until it is your turn to play and then take back the moves you want on the board. The screen in Arena will automatically be updated. When you then make your amended move Arena will ask if this is a new variation or if the old moves should be overwritten.

3.3 Analysing a game

Although Arena won't allow you to start from a specific position you can make many moves manually and use this to either get to the starting position you want or analyse a game. you can also use this method to make Arena record the moves in a human vs. human game.

Having selected the engine and started a new game click on [Position > Analyze Now!](#) (or click the [Analyze](#) button in the Moves window). This will start the engine analyzing the position (unless an opening book is selected, in which case nothing will happen until you are out of book) and you can make moves on the board for both white and black.

If you now want to play the engine from the current position turn off analyze mode. You can now make the next move or click [Game > Move Now!](#) to make the engine move.

3.4 Replaying a game

You can play through the moves of a saved game but unfortunately Arena doesn't send the move information to the board, so you need to follow the moves on the screen too. But you can still add and analyse variations. Get the board ready for a new game, load the PGN file you want and put Arena into Analysis mode. You can now go through the moves using the right-arrow key while making the moves on the board.

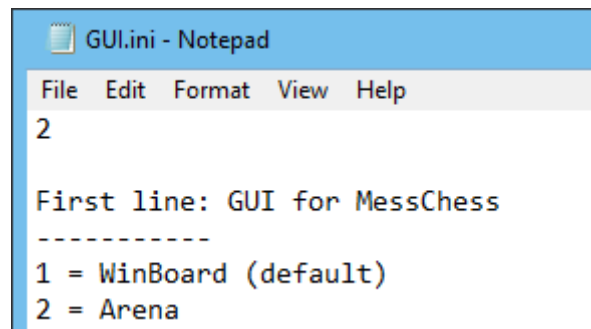
4. Use with CB-Emu (Arena)

CB-Emu is a program by Franz Huber that allows you to play against old chess computers on your PC, using ROM emulations of their processors.

The Setup installation for my driver will load the files into the appropriate folder (<path>\CB-Emu\MessChess\Arena) and you can then use your eBoard by running the Arena.exe program from that folder.

You can also run Arena directly from the MessChess.exe program but to do this you need to edit a file in the CB-Emu\MessChess folder. MessChess defaults to using Winboard rather

than Arena, so change this by editing GUI.INI using a text editor (like Notepad), not a word processor (like Word). Change the first line from 1 to 2:



5. Use with Fritz and ChessBase

5.1 Playing an engine

Having set up the game details (engine, time etc) you can activate the board from the Board tab. For example, in the Easy Game menu:



For PlayChess the option to enable the DGT board is on the [Server Settings](#) screen.

The driver will then load and attempt to connect to the board. Once connected you can make the first move or make the engine move using the [Move Now](#) button.

5.2 Different starting positions

The Fritz and ChessBase programs are written expecting the board to be a DGT, which means they expect the board to have piece recognition. You can try using [Home > Setup Position](#) but I found it to be extremely unreliable.

5.3 Take back moves

You can take back moves by waiting until it is your turn to move and then taking back the computer's last move and then your own move. The LEDs on the board will lead you through the sequence of moves. When you want to enter your replacement move just make it on the board. Fritz automatically adds this move as a new variation so you will need to right click on the variation and select [Promote variation](#) to make it the main line.

5.4 Analysing a game

To analyse a game or position put Fritz into Infinite Analysis mode and then make a sequence of moves from the starting position. You can also use this method to make Fritz record the moves in a human vs. human game.

If you now want to play the engine from the current position turn off analyze mode. You can now make the next move or click [Move Now](#) to make the engine move.

5.5 Replaying games

You can also play through the moves of a saved game. Start a new game, connect the board and get it ready for white's first move. Load the game (for example using [File > Open > Open Database](#)) and you will see the moves in the game panel. Put the engine into Analysis mode (or switch it off completely) and you can now play through the game using the right-arrow key with the board's LEDs showing the moves, or by making the moves on the board. You can also arrow through a set of moves and then make them all on the board.

It is possible to enter variations using the board. To return to the main line either take back the moves on the board or click on the move before your variation and my driver will prompt you to replace the pieces (this step doesn't appear to work at all using the original DGT Rabbit plugin so it looks like ChessBase never programmed this into their software). You can then continue playing through the game or enter another variation.

6. Use with LucasChess

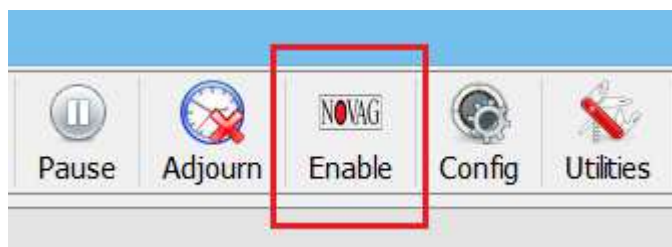
In order to use my driver in LucasChess you need to tell the GUI that you have an electronic board. This is done through the [Options > Configuration](#) screen. Go to the [Boards](#) tab and select Novag UCB for [Digital board](#). (In the old LucasChess turn on [Enable DGT board](#)).

When using my board I prefer not to have the tutor popup on the screen so in the [Engines Configuration](#) I normally go to the [Tutor](#) tab and turn on [Disabled at the beginning of the game](#).

6.1 Playing an engine

Use the [Play](#) option to select an engine to play against. This will show you a screen where you can select the opponent, choose the colour to play, set the time controls, specify a starting position and so on. Once you have completed this click the [Accept](#) button.

If you didn't activate the board using the option on the [Play](#) screen you can now enable it using the button on the menu bar:



Set up the configuration details in my driver if required, and then play the moves on the board and they will appear on the screen in LucasChess.

To start a new game use the [Cancel](#) button and then [Play](#) again, or use [Adjourn](#) to save a game for continuation later. If you adjourn a game where you have flipped the board (black playing from your side) then when you resume the game you will need to set up the position and continue without the board flipped since you can only tell the UCB to flip the board when it is the normal starting position.

You can deactivate and activate the board again at any time.

6.2 Different starting positions

There are two places where you can set up special positions. One is when using [Play against an engine](#) (on the [Initial moves](#) tab) and the other is in [Tools > Create your own game > Utilities > Change starting position > Edit starting position](#). Both will display a screen asking for the new position. My driver will prompt you to set the board in that position.

6.3 Take back moves

You can take back moves by waiting until it is your turn to move and then taking back the computer's last move and then your own move. The LEDs on the board will lead you through the sequence of moves. When you want to enter your replacement move just make it on the board.

6.4 Analysing a game

You can play through your own game by using the [Tools > Create your own game](#) option. Enter the moves you want, including taking back moves. To analyse a move double click on it in the move list panel. You can also use this method to make LucasChess record the moves in a human vs. human game.

To enter a variation right-click on the move and use the [Append variation](#) button to display the variation screen. For this screen you cannot use the board though and must enter the moves using the mouse.

6.5 Replaying games

You can also play through the moves of a saved game. Start a new game and get the board ready for white's first move. Load the game using [Tools > PGN > Load PGN file](#) and you will see the moves in the game panel. Move to the beginning of the game and enable the board. You can now play through the game using the right-arrow key, with the board's LEDs showing the moves. You can also arrow through a set of moves and then make them all on the board.

If you want to enter a variation just make a different move from the one in the file and play through the moves you want. To return to the main line take back the moves in the variation and you can then continue playing through the game.

6.6 Training with a book

The option [Train > Opening > Training](#) with a book allows you to practise your opening repertoire. Load the opening book (a polyglot file with .bin extension) and enable the board. You can then make the moves from the book, and if you get a move wrong then the driver will prompt you to correct the position. Use the [Reinit](#) button to start again from the beginning.

7. Use with Shredder

7.1 Playing an engine

When you select [File > New Game](#) you can select the strength of the opponent or you can use [Levels](#) to set the strength and time controls. I normally turn off the Coach too so that screen popups don't interrupt the game while I'm looking at the board. This is in [Help > Coach is Watching](#).

To activate the board use [Mode > External Board > DGT Board](#):



Set up the configuration details in my driver if required, and then play the first move as white. If you want to play black select [Commands > Compute / Switch Sides](#) and the computer will make its move.

To start a new game either select [File > New Game](#) or return all the pieces to the starting position on the board. Or use [File > Edit Position](#) (or the [Edit Position](#) button) to set up a new starting position.

As with the other GUIs it is a good idea to deactivate the board before quitting the GUI.

7.2 Take back moves

If you want to take back a move wait until it is your turn to play and then take back the moves you want on the board. The screen in Shredder will automatically be updated. When you then make your amended move Shredder will ask if this is a new variation or if the old moves should be overwritten.

Note that with my driver when you take back a move the Shredder clock is also rewound to the correct time. This doesn't happen if you play with Shredder on your screen and use the Take Back button.

7.3 Analysing a game

You can use the [Mode > Analysis](#) option to allow you to make multiple moves on the board with the engine analysing the positions. You can also make take back moves and create new variations, or if you want to continue playing against the engine from the current position use [Mode > Play against Computer](#).

7.4 Replaying a game

You can play through the moves of a saved game but unfortunately Shredder doesn't send the move information to the board, so you need to follow the moves on the screen too. But you can still add and analyse variations. Get the board ready for a new game, load the PGN file you want using [File > Load Game](#) and put Shredder into Analysis mode. You can now go through the moves using the right-arrow key while making the moves on the board.

To enter a variation just make a different move to the one in the game. Unfortunately, to return to the main line you need to manually take back the moves in the variation before you can then continue the game.

8. Use as a UCI or Winboard engine

For GUIs that don't support the DLL version of my driver I have also created an engine version. This can be used in an engine vs engine game to allow you to use your board for playing games. Some of the disadvantages of playing like this are:

-  You are not allowed to take back moves in engine matches

- 👤 You can't play "rated" games
- 👤 Opening book options might be limited
- 👤 Time control options are often limited (it isn't always possible to give one engine more time than the other)

The engine supports both the Winboard and UCI protocols.

My DLL driver and Winboard engine both use an INI file to store the settings, which gave me a choice for the UCI engine. I decided to keep it the same as the other two, so the configuration of the driver in UCI mode is controlled by the [Config](#) tab of my screen rather than the UCI engine configuration in the GUI.

8.1 Installation

My Setup program will ask you where to install the engine file. I recommend that you create a main folder for holding any of my eBoard engines that you want to load and that when you "install" them into each GUI that you link to them from that folder. If you load them separately into each GUI you will need to manually copy the files again each time I issue an update. It also means that the eBoard will use the same INI file settings across all of the GUIs you use.

The process of installing the engine into the GUI depends on each GUI, but in general you will need to give the engine a name and identify where the EXE file is.

8.2 Playing an engine

How you create an engine vs engine match also depends on how the GUI works. You might find that some GUIs also start the engine during the match setup in which case my driver screen will appear quite early.

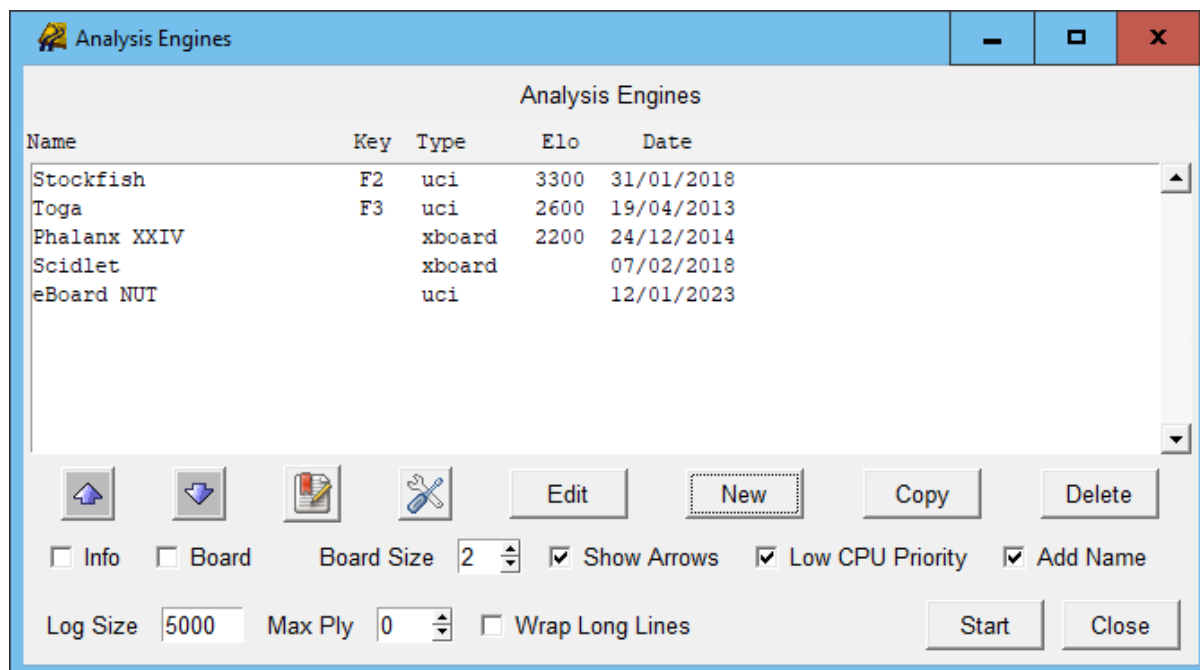
Also, some GUIs don't close the engine when an engine match is finished so you might need to either start a different match or use the "Close engine" option in the GUI to close my driver screen.

9. Use with SCIDvsPC

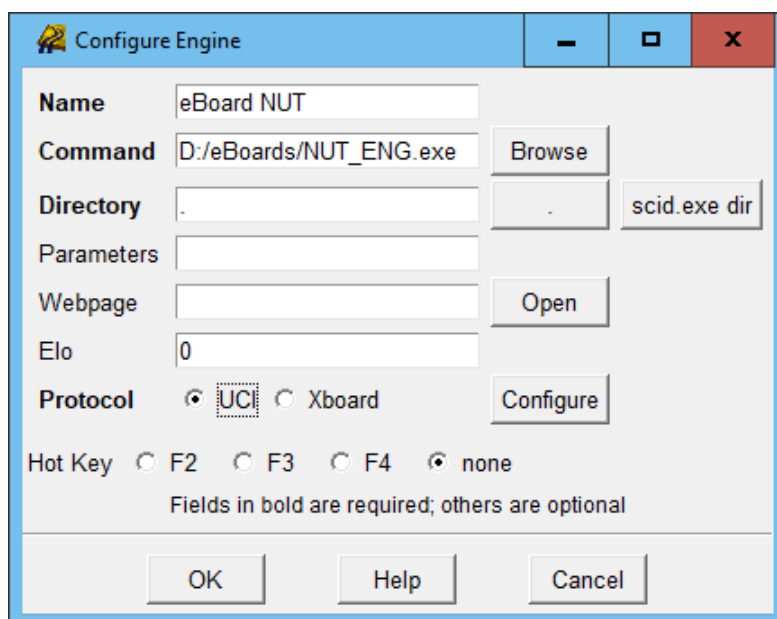
Although SCIDvsPC uses the UCI engine version of my driver it has been amended to allow for take back moves and so on. It is used by adding it as a secondary Analysis engine rather than the main engine in a computer vs computer match.

9.1 Installation

Having installed the driver file using the Setup program (probably to a common folder for all GUIs to share) you must then install it as an engine in SCIDvsPC. Go to [Tools > Analysis engines](#):



Use the [New](#) button to add an engine. Give it a name, select the engine file and make sure it is set to use UCI as the protocol:



Click [Ok](#) when done.

9.2 Playing an engine

Before starting a game go into the Analysis engines screen ([Tools > Analysis engines](#)), select the eBoard you want and click [Start](#). The driver will load and connect to your board.

Now you can start a normal game using [Play > Computer UCI engine](#) or [Play > Internet \(FICS\)](#). To play black use the [Flip board](#) button. Moves made on the eBoard will automatically be made on the screen so that the engine can reply.

You can take back moves during a game. Wait until it is your turn to move then take back the computer's move and your own. When you have finished taking back moves click on the [Resume](#) button to continue playing.

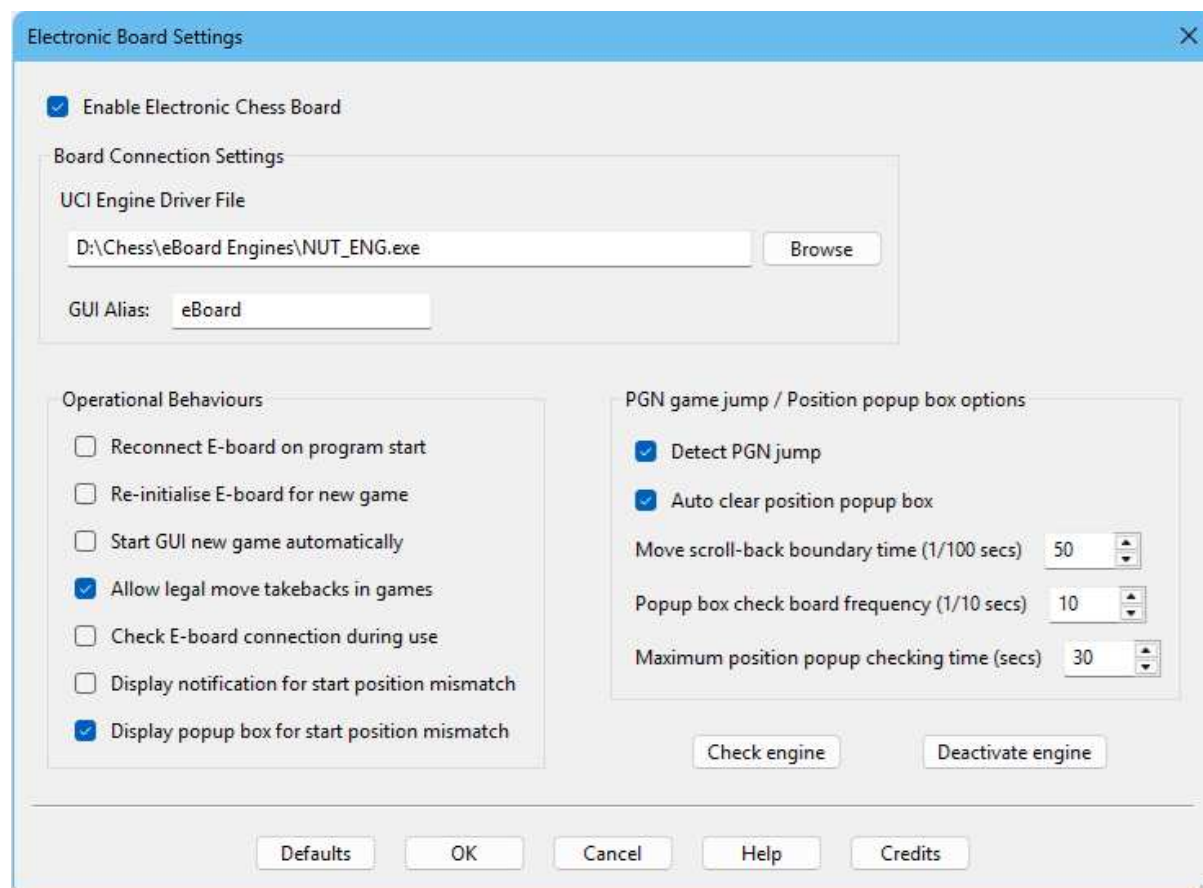
You can also enter a game or record the moves of a human vs human game by using [Game > New game](#) and entering the moves on the eBoard.

10. Use with Nimzo_3D

Although Nimzo_3D uses the UCI engine version of my driver it has been amended to allow for take back moves and so on. It is used by activating the UCI engine on the [Games > Electronic Chess Board](#) menu item rather than using it in a computer vs computer match.

10.1 Installation

Having installed the driver file using the Setup program (probably to a common folder for all GUIs to share) you must then link it as a chessboard in Nimzo_3D. Go to [Games > Electronic Chess Board](#):



Click [Ok](#) when done.

10.2 Using the eBoard

Having enabled the eBoard you can then use it in all of the functions where you would use the screen. So playing an engine, replaying games etc is just the same. You can take back moves on the board too.

11. Legal stuff

This software is distributed in the hope that it will be useful, but WITHOUT ANY WARRANTY; without even the implied warranty of MERCHANTABILITY or FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

Copyright (C) 2017-2026 Graham O'Neill

[<https://goneill.co.nz/chess>]

Piece graphics:

By Wikipedia user Cburnett, via Wikimedia Commons
[CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>)]