

TRADITIONAL BACKGAMMON RULES

CONTENTS

30 x counters (15 x black, 15 x white), 4 x dice (2 x black, 2 x white), 1 x doubling dice, playing board and rules.

OVERVIEW

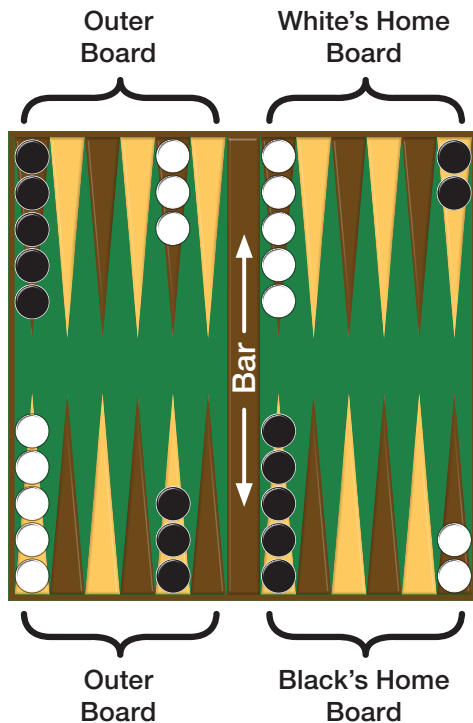
Backgammon is a fast-moving game of skill and chance for two players, played on a board consisting of twenty-four narrow triangles called points. The triangles alternate in colour and are grouped into four quadrants of six triangles each. The quadrants are referred to as a player's home board and outer board, and the opponent's home board and outer board. The home and outer boards are separated from each other by a ridge down the center of the board called the bar.

Figure 1. A board with the counters in their initial position.

An alternate arrangement is the reverse of the one shown here, with the home board on the left and the outer board on the right.

The points are numbered for either player starting in that player's home board. The outermost point is the twenty-four point, which is also the opponent's one point. Each player has fifteen counters of his own colour. The initial arrangement of counters is: two on each player's twenty-four point, five on each player's thirteen point, three on each player's eight point, and five on each player's six point.

Both players each have their own pair of dice. Also included is a doubling cube, with the numerals 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 and 64 on its faces which is used to keep track of the current stake of the game.



OBJECT OF THE GAME

The object of the game is to move all your counters into your own home board and then bear them off. The first player to bear off all their counters wins the game.

MOVEMENT OF THE COUNTERS

To start the game, each player throws a single die. This determines both the player to go first and the numbers to be played. If equal numbers come up, then both players roll again until they roll different numbers. The player throwing the higher number now moves his counters according to the numbers showing on both dice. After the first roll, the players throw two dice and alternate turns.

The roll of the dice indicates how many points the player is to move his counters. The counters are always moved forward, to a lower-numbered point. The following rules apply:

1. A counter may be moved only to an open point, one that is not occupied by two or more opposing counters.
2. The numbers on the two dice constitute separate moves. For example, if a player rolls 5 and 3, he may move one counter five spaces to an open point and another counter three spaces to an open point, or he may move the one counter a total of eight spaces to an open point, but only if the intermediate point (either three or five spaces from the starting point) is also open.
3. A player who rolls doubles plays the numbers shown on the dice twice. A roll of 6 and 6 means that the player has four sixes to use, and he may move any combination of counters he feels appropriate to complete this requirement.
4. A player must use both numbers of a roll if this is legally possible (or all four numbers of a double). When only one number can be played, the player must play that number. Or if either number can be played but not both, the player must play the larger one. When neither number can be used, the player loses his turn. In the case of doubles, when all four numbers cannot be played, the player must play as many numbers as he can.

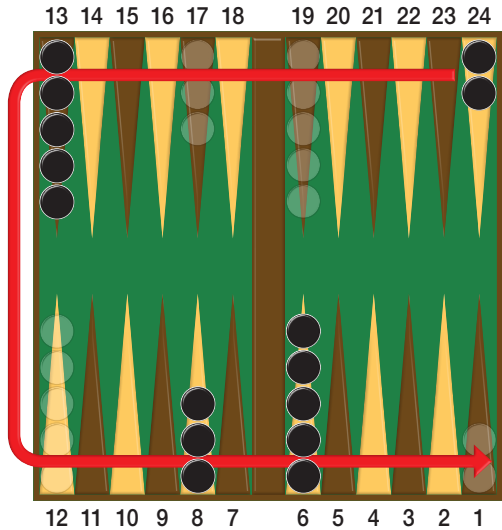


Figure 2. Direction of movement of Black's counters. White's counters move in the opposite direction.

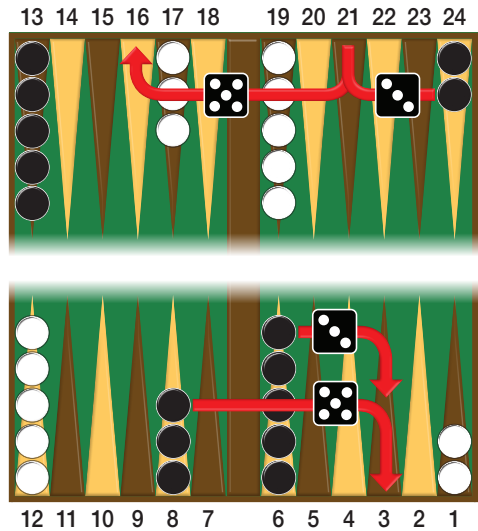


Figure 3. Two ways that Black can play a roll of 3 and 4.

HITTING AND ENTERING

A point occupied by a single counter of either colour is called a blot. If an opposing counter lands on a blot, the blot is hit and placed on the bar.

Any time a player has one or more counters on the bar, his first obligation is to enter those counter(s) into the opposing home board. A counter is entered by moving it to an open point corresponding to one of the numbers on the rolled dice.

For example, if a player rolls 4 and 6, he may enter a counter onto either the opponent's four point or six point, so long as the prospective point is not occupied by two or more of the opponent's counters.

If neither of the points is open, the player loses his turn. If a player can enter some but not all of his counters, he must enter as many as he can and then forfeit the remainder of his turn.

After the last of a player's counters has been entered, any unused numbers on the dice must be played, by moving either the counter that was entered or a different counter.

BEARING OFF

Once a player has moved all fifteen counters into his home board, he may commence bearing off. A player bears off a counter by rolling a number that corresponds to the point on which the counter resides, and then removing that counter from the board. Thus, rolling a 6 permits the player to remove a counter from the six point.

If there is no counters on the point indicated by the roll, the player must make a legal move using a counter on a higher-numbered point. If there are no counters on higher-numbered points, the player is permitted (and required) to remove a counter from the highest point on which one of his counters resides. A player is under no obligation to bear off if he can make an otherwise legal move.

A player must have all of his active counters in his home board in order to bear off. If a counter is hit during the bear-off process, the player must bring that counter back to his home board before continuing to bear off. The first player to bear off all fifteen counters wins the game.

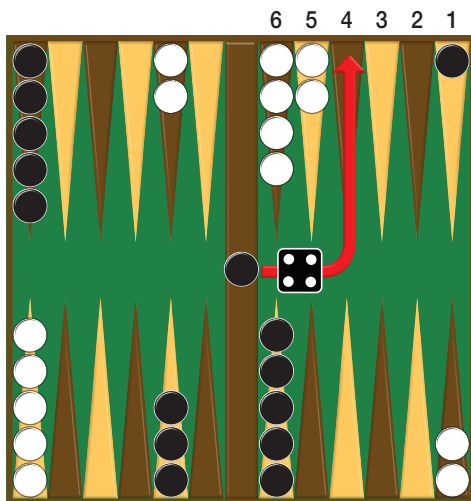


Figure 4. If Black rolls  with a counter on the bar, he must enter the counter onto Whites's four point since Whites's six point is not open.

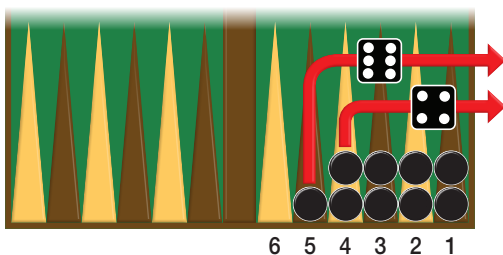


Figure 5. Black rolls  and bears off two counters.

DOUBLING

Backgammon is played for an agreed stake per point. Each game starts at one point. During the game, a player who feels he has a sufficient advantage may propose doubling the stakes. He may do this only at the start of his own turn and before he has rolled the dice.

A player who is offered a double may refuse, in which case he concedes the game and pays one point. Otherwise, he must accept the double and play on for the new higher stakes. A player who accepts a double becomes the owner of the doubling cube and only he may make the next double.

Subsequent doubles in the same game are called redoubles. If a player refuses a redouble, he must pay the number of points that were at stake prior to the redouble. Otherwise, he becomes the new owner of the doubling cube and the game continues at twice the previous stakes. There is no limit to the number of redoubles in a game.

SCORING A BACKGAMMON MATCH

Games in backgammon are usually played in matches. This means that players often will play a series of games in an effort to reach an amount of points that has been agreed upon by both parties. So for example, you're playing a race to seven points you basically have to win seven games to win that match. Scoring matches is an essential skill when learning backgammon basics.

In a single game, if the losing opponent is able to remove at least one of his counters, the player gets the number of points, which is previously determined by roll of the doubling cube. If no doubling cube was used, 1 point is given to the winner.

In a double game or often times referred to as a **gammon**, the player wins twice the amount on the doubling cube. This occurs when the losing player has not removed a single counter from the board.

Lastly, a triple game or **backgammon** occurs when the winning player has successfully removed all his counters from the board yet the losing player has not removed a single one of his counters from the board and at the same time, still has counters on the opponents home board or at the bar. The winning player gets three times the amount of the doubling cube.