

(American) Checkers

Players 2

Length 30 minutes

Equipment one standard piecepack

Version 1.2.2 (2021-01-04)

Description

(American) checkers (aka English draughts aka straight checkers) is a classic two-player board game straightforwardly adapted to the piecepack.

Objective

A player wins by capturing and/or blocking all their opponent's pieces.¹ If neither player can force a win then the game ends in a draw.²

Setup

Make an 8×8 board with the backs of 16 tiles. Give each player all the coins of two suits³—these 12 coins will initially serve as each player's (uncrowned) *men*—and place them as in Figure 1.

The Order Of Play

Decide by random selection which player will make the first move.⁴ In subsequent games alternate which player makes the first move. Within a game players alternate moves, during their move each player moves a single piece.

¹That is if their opponent were allowed an extra move after the conclusion of the game (which they are not) then they would not have any legal moves available to them *for that move*. One also wins if their opponent resigns, forfeits, and (when using clocks) fails to reach the time control.

²Formally, a game ends in a draw if either 1) the players agree to a draw, 2) on their next move a player repeats the same board position for the third time in a game, or 3) in the past 40 moves no pieces have been removed from the board *and* neither player has advanced an uncrowned man forward.

³For example “astronomical” versus “power” suits or “dark” versus “light” suits.

⁴Traditional methods are 1) a coin toss or 2) one player hiding a piece from each player in their hands and having the other player pick a hand (the player whose piece is in that hand will make the first move).

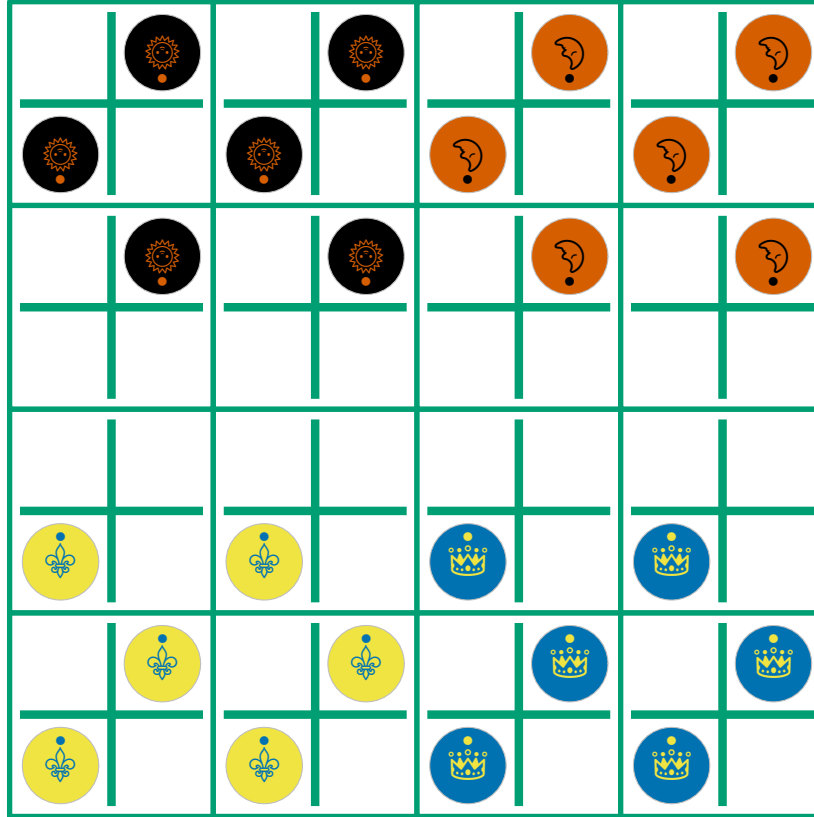


Figure 1: (American) Checkers starting diagram

The Moves

Each player has two possible pieces available to them: (uncrowned) *men* represented by a single coin and (crowned) *kings* represented by two coins stacked upon each other. At the beginning of the game there are only men, when a man reaches the farthest row of the board⁵ then their move ends and they are promoted to a *king* by placing an available coin *under* the man.⁶

Men and kings each have a non-capturing *simple move* and a capturing *jump* move. For the *simple move* men slide *diagonally* to an empty square one square forward while kings slide diagonally to an empty square one square forward *or*

⁵Traditionally each of these rows is called a *king-row*.

⁶Alternatively, if coins of that player's suits are available one could also place a coin suit-side up *on top* of the man as well. However if only coins of that player's opponent's suits are available one must promote by placing a coin *under* the man.

backwards. For the capturing *jump* men move diagonally to an empty square two squares forward over an opponent's piece that exists in between that square and the capturing piece's initial square (the opponent's piece is then removed from the board). Kings may jump over an opponent diagonally two squares forward *or* backwards. Multiple jumps in a turn are possible, if after a jump a piece is in a position to make another jump (possibly in another diagonal direction) then they can (and in fact must) do so until they are no longer in a position to do so.⁷

If possible a player must choose to do a jump instead of a simple move. After making a jump a piece must continue to jump until it can no longer do so. If multiple pieces can make a jump and/or a piece may jump in multiple directions then the player may choose which piece and which jumps to make—they need not maximize the number of possible jumps (but any jumping piece must continue to make jumps until it can no longer do so).

Common Rule Variants

- Jumps as described earlier in the rules are now optional but if a player fails to do (previously mandatory) jump in their turn then the piece that would have jumped is removed by the opponent before their move.⁸ This is called “huffing”.
- A man's jumping move doesn't necessarily end upon reaching the king-row and promoting to a king but (if possible) must continue making jumps as a king.
- For two subsequent games (each player moving first in one) use a pre-determined 3 move opening.⁹

Additional Resources

- www.ludism.org/ppwiki/Checkers
- boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/2083
- www.cynningstan.com/game/399
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English draughts
- www.wcdf.net/rules.htm

⁷Note once a man reaches the king-row their turn is over and they are promoted to king.

⁸Even if that piece jumped over one or more pieces it can still be “huffed” off the board if that piece could have made additional jumps that turn. If there are multiple pieces that could have jumped that turn then the opponent gets to choose which one to huff off the board.

⁹Traditionally drawn from a recognized set of ballot cards.

Credits

Game design: Traditional, adapted by Mark A. Biggar and Trevor L. Davis

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