

# Backgammon (GB94)

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## Description and rules of Backgammon

Introductory note

Backgammon is a very ancient game derived from an early Middle Eastern game known as Tables. The modern game is of English origin and is some 300 years old. The introduction of a "doubling cube" used in the gambling of the outcome of the game is much more recent.

Included with the game:

* two sets of 15 counters, one brown with a tactile mark and the other white
* two pair of 1-to-6 dice, brown and white
* one pair of tactile dice
* one doubling cube
* two cube boxes.

## Orientation of the board

Remove the game from its packaging and place the leather case on a table in front of you with the carry handle and clasps in front of you. Carefully open the case fully to reveal the playing board.

With the board in front of you rotate it 90 degrees so the centre hinged part, also known as the “BAR” is facing towards you and your opponent.

The board is divided into four tables known as 'inner' and 'outer' tables; each table contains six finger-like sections known as “POINTS”. The points are alternately coloured brown and cream on a dark brown background and are clearly distinguished by a tactile ridge that separates each point.

At either end of the board are counter wells. These are where the counters are stored for transit and also where counters can be placed once they are removed from the board during play.

## Positioning the counters on the board

For ease of description at this stage, assume that you are playing with the brown, tactile counters. Theoretically, the points directly in front of you are numbered 1 to 12, which you will need to know for placing the counters at the start of the game. For the brown player, the numbers run from left to right, for the white player opposite, the numbers run from right to left.

The counters are positioned on the board at the start of the game on just eight points, and each opposite point is mirrored with the same number of counters of the opposing colour.

On point 1 in brown's inner table, place two white counters, and two brown counters on the opposite point. On point 6in brown's inner table, place five brown counters and five white counters on the opposite point. On point 8 in brown's outer table, place three brown counters, and three white counters on the opposite point. On point 12 in brown's outer table, place five white counters, and five brown counters on the opposite point.

You should now have columns of counters of equal numbers on points 1, 6, 8 and 12. The counters are located on the points from the outer edge of the board inwards.

## Playing the game

The objective of the game is to move all your counters around the board into your inner table. It is only when a player has all his counters in his inner table that he can then remove his counters from the board known as BEARING-OFF. The first player to 'bear-off' all his counters wins the game.

The counters move round the board in opposite directions, the brown counters move anti-clockwise and the white counters move clockwise, according to the number thrown on the dice.

To decide which player starts the game, each player together casts one die. If both players throw the same number, the dice are thrown again. The player who throws the highest number starts the game using the numbers on both dice as his first move.

Apart from the first throw of the dice to decide who plays first, the dice are thereafter thrown together and the counters moved according to the number shown on the two dice.

The numbers however are always taken separately, and not the combined total on the two dice. For example, if the numbers thrown are 4 and 2, this player has the following options to move his counters; a) move one counter four points and then the same counter on a further two points; b) or the same counter can move two points and then four points; or c) move one counter four points and the other counter two points.

When a double number is thrown, the value of the dice is doubled. In this event, the player has four moves, but each move is counted separately using a combination of moves to make up the total score. There is no limit as to how many counters can occupy a point, so if more than five counters are on a point the additional counters are placed on top.

When a player has two or more counters on a point, this is known as a BLOCK. The opposing player cannot land on a point that is blocked. When a player lands on a point occupied by only one opponent's counter, this is known as a HIT and the 'hit' counter is removed from the point and placed on the 'bar'. A player with a counter on the bar cannot move any of his counters until the counter on the bar has been re-entered into the game in the oppositions inner table.

For the counter on the bar to re-enter, the player must throw a number on the dice that corresponds to the number of a vacant point on his opponent's inner table. If the counter re-enters on a point with only one opponent's counter in, the opponent's counter is hit and is placed on the bar. As it is possible for a player to be hit again whilst he is on the bar, all the counters on the bar must be re-entered before he can move around the board again.

Only when all a player's counters are in his inner table can he start 'bearing off'. If the throw of the dice shows a three and four, for example, one counter may be removed from point 3, and the other from point 4. If, however, a player does not have a counter on a corresponding point to the number thrown, he must move another of his counters in his inner table, for example from point 6 to point 3.

## The “Doubling Cube” for gambling on Backgammon

This is a relatively new addition to the game that gives players the option to gamble on the final outcome. A doubling cube with faces marked 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 is used.

There is a doubling cube included in this backgammon but it isn’t tactile, so using braille notes or a simple voice recorder can help you use this more advanced version of the game.

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Date: November 2018.

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