

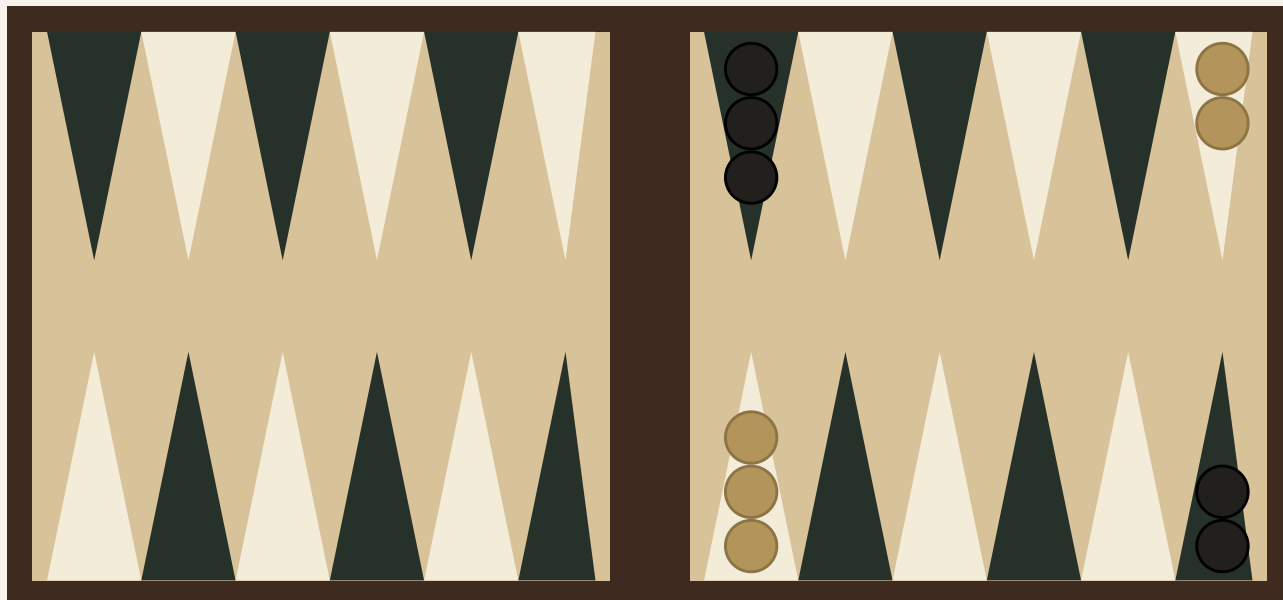


INCLUDED WITH EVERY BOARD

The Den Primer

*Backgammon: the rules, the doubling cube, and how to win
graciously. Ten minutes from now, you play.*

The board, and what you are trying to do



THE POINT OF IT

You have fifteen checkers. Race them all the way around the board into your home quarter, then bear them off. First man to remove all fifteen wins. Everything else is negotiation.

THE SETUP

Each side starts: two on the opponent's one-point, five on the mid-point, three on your eight-point, five on your six-point. It looks complicated for exactly one evening.

MOVING

Roll two dice. Move one checker per die, or one checker twice. Doubles are moved four times. You may land anywhere your opponent does not hold with two or more checkers.

HITTING

A lone checker is a *blot*. Land on it and it goes to the bar, where it must re-enter in your home quarter before its owner does anything else. This is where friendships are tested.

Finishing, and the cube that ends marriages

BEARING OFF

Once all fifteen of your checkers reach your home quarter, you may begin removing them, one per pip rolled. If you are hit while bearing off, that checker starts its journey again from the bar. Compose yourself.

THE DOUBLING CUBE

The die marked 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 is not rolled. Before your turn, you may turn it to double the stakes. Your opponent either concedes the game at the current stake, or accepts and owns the cube. Invented in New York in the 1920s, reputedly to make gentlemen lose money faster. It works.

RESULT	WHAT HAPPENED	POINTS
Single	Loser has borne off at least one checker	1 × cube
Gammon	Loser has borne off none	2 × cube
Backgammon	Loser still has a checker on the bar or in your home	3 × cube

WHEN TO DOUBLE

The old club rule: double when you would rather they dropped, accept when you would rather they doubled. If in doubt, look them in the eye. The dice are only half the game.

House note: the first game of the night is always played for the chair nearest the fire.

Five tips, and the manners of the table

- 01 **Own your five-point.** The best real estate on the board. Make it early and most beginners never recover.
- 02 **Hit and cover.** Sending a man to the bar is twice as sweet when the return points are closed.
- 03 **Do not race a losing race.** If you are behind on the count, stay back and play for the hit. Boldness is a strategy, not a mood.
- 04 **Doubles win primes.** Six consecutive points is a wall no checker can pass. Build toward it whenever the dice cooperate.
- 05 **Respect the cube.** Most games between friends are lost by accepting doubles that flattery should have declined.

DEN ETIQUETTE

- Dice are rolled in the cup and land on your right-hand board, or they are rolled again.
- No phones on the table. The board was here first.
- The winner pours. The loser resets the board and says nothing.
- Advice is offered only when asked, and it never is.

Now put this down and play. You learn the rest by losing.

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