

linkage

A two-player abstract game by **Ethan Larson**

INTRODUCTION

Linkage is played on a 7x7 square grid with domino-shaped pieces that cover two squares each.

The two players have different goals: one player, called "**Fewer**" needs to keep the number of color groups low, while the other player, called "**More**", needs to make the number of color groups high.

COMPONENTS

A Linkage set includes:

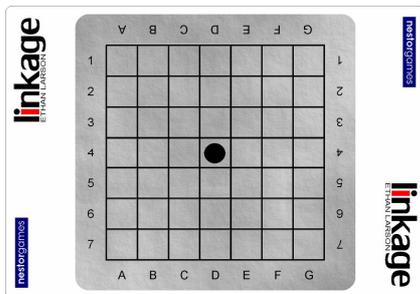
- A board with a 7x7 square grid
- 24 playing pieces, 6 of each color (white, blue, red, and yellow).



- 1 black counter and 1 green counter ('ice' white for the Deluxe Edition).

GAME RULES

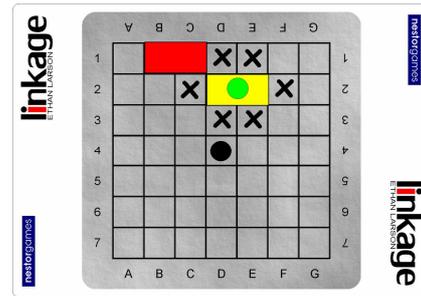
The game begins with the board empty, except for the **black** counter, which is placed on the center square:



Players choose who will be **More** and who will be **Fewer**.

The **More** player always goes first. Each turn consists of choosing one of the remaining pieces and placing it on the board, then placing the **green** counter on top of that piece. Note that neither player owns any of the pieces; they may choose any color to place on each turn.

When placing a piece, it may be placed anywhere it fits without overlapping other pieces or the **black** counter. There is, however, one restriction: the piece may not be placed so that it touches the previously-placed piece which is marked by the **green** counter.



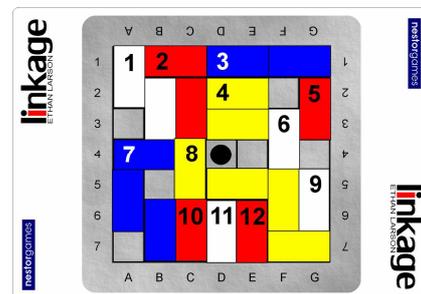
The yellow piece was just placed, so the green counter is on it. The Xs show where a piece may NOT be placed on the next turn

If a player does not have a legal move because of the location of the green counter, he removes it from the board and passes that turn.

Play continues until there are no more available moves.

END OF GAME

Once no more moves can be made, the number of color groups on the board is counted. A color group is any set of one or more pieces of the same color that are connected vertically or horizontally. See the diagram for an example. If there are 12 or more color groups, **More** wins the game. If there are 11 or less, the **Fewer** player wins.



Finished game. **More** won.

OPTIONAL RULE

At the time this is being printed, Linkage strategy has developed somewhat and shows a slight advantage for the **More** player. So the following rule can be played both to mitigate this advantage, and to add some variety to the starting configuration.

When beginning the game, one player starts by placing the **black** counter anywhere on the board. Then the other player chooses whether to play **More** or **Fewer**. Play then continues normally, with whoever is **More** going first as usual.