

**B A C K G A M M O N**

# **Backgammon**

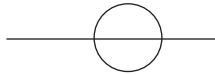
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From Hoyle's Games Modernized

## **Backgammon**

From HOYLE'S GAMES MODERNIZED  
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*New Edition*  
THOROUGHLY REVISED TO 1909  
WITH DIAGRAMS



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**B**ackgammon is played by two persons, on a special “board” with thirty “men,” fifteen white and fifteen black (or red), similar to those used for the game of Draughts. The board (see Fig. 1) is square, usually of wood, lined with leather, and is divided into two equal compartments, each with a raised wall or border. It is usually made in two portions, hinged so as to fold together, and bearing



*Figure 1*

on their outward surfaces the necessary squares for draughts or chess, so that the one board may answer both purposes.

The board is so placed in use that the two compartments, known as “tables,” shall lie longitudinally between the players. One of these is known as the “outer,” the other as the “inner” or “home” table. Which of the two is for the time being the inner and which the outer table is governed by the arrangement of the men at starting. With the men placed as in Fig. 1, the right hand is the inner or home table, and the left hand consequently the outer table. The portions of the two latter nearest to each player are known as his inner and outer tables respectively.

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Each table is marked with twelve “points,” six at either end. They are alternately of black and white, black and red, or other distinctive colours. The two points in the inner table farthest from the dividing partition or “bar” are known as the “ace” points, and those next in order as the two or “deuce” points, followed in succession by the three or “trois” points, the four or “quatre” points, the five or “cinque” points, and finally the “six”[65] points, next the bar. The points in the outer tables are designated in like manner, but starting in this case from the dividing partition. The ace point in the outer table is more commonly known as the “bar” point. A pair of dice (or sometimes a pair for each player) and a couple of dice-boxes complete the apparatus of the game.

The men are arranged at starting as shown in Fig. 1—viz., two of White’s men are placed on the ace point in Black’s inner table, five are placed on the six point in Black’s outer table, three on the deuce point in White’s outer table, and five on the six point in White’s inner table. Black’s men are placed in like manner on the points immediately facing these.

### **Playing.**

The game is commenced by each player throwing on the centre of the board a single die, the higher throw of the two giving the right to begin. In the event of a tie, the players throw again. All subsequent throws are with both dice.

The thrower of the higher number may either adopt the points shown by the two dice as his own throw, or throw again. After throwing, he calls the number of the throw, the higher number first, as “six deuce,” “cinque trois,” “quatre ace,” or as the case may be, and then proceeds to make his move in accordance with it. The movement of the men of each player is from the ace point in his opponent's home table towards the like point in his own, though for many purposes it suffices if he can play them into his own table, independently of their reaching any particular point therein, the object of the game being first to get all the player's men into his own inner table, and then to play them out of it again, according to certain rules to be hereafter stated. The number uppermost on each die entitles the player to move one man forward a corresponding number of points. Thus if he threw “six trois,” he is entitled to move one man six points onward, and then the same or another man three points onward. In the event of his throwing the same points with both dice (known as “doublets”), he is entitled to play the throw twice over. Suppose, for example, that he throws two aces; he may move one or more men forward to an aggregate extent of four points. If he throw double deuces, he may move to an aggregate extent of eight points; if double threes, twelve points, and so on.

The right to move is subject to a certain qualification—viz., that a man can only be played to a point which is either vacant or occupied by one or more men of the player, or by

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one man only of the adversary. A player getting two men on a given point is said to “make” such point, and as he thereby secures such men from capture, and at the same time impedes the onward march of the enemy, it is always an object to do this. A single man on a given point is known as a “blot,” and not only does not prevent the enemy playing to that point, but in the event of its being “hit”—i.e., reached by an adverse throw, it is “taken up” (placed on the bar between the two tables), and, however far advanced it may have been, has to begin its journey anew from the inner table of the adversary.

Nor can such man again start on its journey until its owner is fortunate enough to make a throw corresponding with a vacant point or blot in such table. Until he does this, the play of his other men is suspended.

If the adverse player’s home table is completely full—i.e., each point occupied by two or more men, his play is altogether suspended, the adversary continuing to throw and move until the course of play again throws open one or more points in his table.

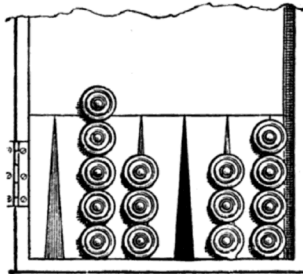
Any part of a throw which cannot be played is lost to the thrower,

but every player is compelled to play the whole of his throw if it is possible to do so.



## Bearing off the Men.

When either player has succeeded in getting all his men into his home table, he proceeds to “bear them off”—i.e., to remove them from the board. When the game has reached this stage, each throw entitles the player either to move forward a man or men (to the extent indicated by the throw) within the limits of his own table, or to remove men from the corresponding points. Thus, suppose that the player's men are thus distributed in his table: five men on the cinque point, three on the quatre point, three on the deuce, and four on the ace point, the trois and six points being unoccupied (see Fig. 2). Suppose that the player throws “quatre trois.” For the quatre, he may either remove a man from the quatre point or advance a man from the “cinque” to the “ace” point. In the case of the trois, he has no man on that point, and therefore must play forward, either by advancing a man from the cinque to the deuce, or from the quatre to the ace point. If, however, he throws a number which he cannot deal with after either



*Figure 2*

of these fashions—e.g., a six, he is entitled to bear off a man from his highest occupied point, in this case the cinque.

Doublets have, as in the earlier stage of the game, a twofold

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value, and may be played either wholly by moving men forward, wholly by bearing off, or partly by the one method and partly by the other, as may be desirable. Suppose, for instance, that the player, having his men as shown in the figure, throws deuces; having only three men on the deuce point, he can only bear off that number; the fourth man must be played forward, either from the cinque or quatre point.

The player who first succeeds in removing all his men from the board wins the game, but the value of the game depends upon the stage reached by the adverse player, as follows:—

If the adversary has got all his men into his own home table, and has begun to bear off, the game of the winner is known as a “hit.”

If the winner has borne off all his men before his adversary has begun to do the same, the game is known as a “gammon.” The loser is said to be “gammoned,” and pays double the agreed stake.

If the winner has borne off all his men while the adversary has still a man or men “up” (i.e., on the bar) or in his (the winner’s) home table, the game is a “backgammon,” and the loser pays either thrice or four times (as may have been agreed) the amount of the single stake.

Where several games are played in succession, the winner of a “hit” throws first in the game next following. After a

gammon or backgammon, the players throw again for the right to begin, as at starting.

### **Hints for Play.**

A leading principle is to “make points” whenever you fairly can, especially in or close to your home table. A second general principle is to avoid the leaving of “blots,” particularly where they are likely to be “hit” by the adversary.[66] This latter principle is, however, subject to many qualifications. The advantages of spreading your men, in readiness to make points, may more than counterbalance the risk, and in certain critical conditions of the game it is sometimes even desirable to be “hit,” inasmuch as it enables you to make a fresh start from your adversary's home table, and so get the opportunity in turn of taking him up.

At the opening of a game the men on both sides are in a uniform position, and it is, consequently, possible to lay down specific rules as to the best method of playing any given throw. We will go seriatim through all the possible throws. In some instances alternative methods will be given, according as the player aims merely at securing a hit, and is content, therefore, to play for safety, or elects to play a more risky game upon the chance of securing a gammon. This case often arises where the player has already lost the first hit of a rubber, in which case, if he loses the next game, he has lost

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the rubber also; but if he can secure a gammon (reckoning as a double game), he becomes the winner of the rubber.

**Aces.**—(The best possible throw at starting.) Play two men on your “bar” point, and two on your cinque point.

**Deuce Ace.**—For a hit, play the deuce from the five men in your adversary’s outer-table, and the ace from the ace point in his inner table. For a gammon, play the ace from the six to the ace point in your own table.

**Deuces.**—For a hit, play two from the six to the quatre point in your own table, and the other two from the ace to the trois point in your opponent’s inner table. For a gammon, play the second pair from the five men in his outer table.

**Trois Ace.**—Make your cinque point.

**Trois Deuce.**—The approved play is to carry two men from the five in your adversary’s outer table to the quatre and cinque points in your own outer table. This, of course, makes two blots. To avoid this, some, for a hit, play one man from the same point to the deuce point in the above-mentioned table, but the bolder play is to be preferred.

**Double Trois.**—There are three ways of playing this throw. Some players make the bar point. The more usual play is, for a hit, to play two to the cinque point in the player’s own, and the other two to the quatre point in the

adversary's table. For a gammon, play the last two from the six to the trois point in your own table.

**Quatre Ace.**—Play the quatre from the five men in your opponent's outer table, and the ace from his ace point. (Timid players, fearing to leave two blots, sometimes play the whole throw from the first-mentioned point, but the plan is not to be recommended.)

**Quatre Deuce.**—Make your quatre point.

**Quatre Trois.**—Play two men from the five in your adversary's outer table.

**Double Quatre.**—Play two men from the ace to the cinque point in the adversary's inner table, and two from the five in his outer table. For a gammon, play two men only, from the point last mentioned to the cinque point in your own table.

**Cinque Ace.**—Play the cinque from the five men in your adversary's outer table, and the ace from the ace point in his inner table. For a gammon, play the ace from the six to the cinque point in your own table.

**Cinque Deuce.**—Play both men from the five in your adversary's outer table.

**Cinque Trois.**—Make your trois point.

**Cinque Quatre.**—Move one man from your adversary's

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ace point to the trois point in his outer table.

**Double Cinque.**—Carry two men from the five in the adversary's outer table, and make your trois point.

**Six Ace.**—Make your bar point.

**Six Deuce.**—Move a man from the five in your adversary's outer table to the cinque point in your own table.

**Six Trois, Six Quatre, Six Cinque.**—Carry one man from your adversary's ace point as far as the throw will permit.

**Sixes.**—Place two men on your adversary's bar point, and two on your own.

Of the above throws (at the outset of the game), double aces are reckoned the best, and double sixes next best. Double trois comes third, followed by trois ace and six ace. Doubles, if playable, are good, as covering greater distance.

Any throw in which the higher of the two numbers is two in advance of the other (as cinque trois, trois ace) is also good, as enabling you to make a point in your table

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## **Colophon**

Description of typography, paper, production, etc.