

Backgammon

The rules on one page

Players
2

You need
A backgammon board, 15 checkers for each player, two dice for each player, a dice cup each and a doubling cube

Goal
Bring all 15 of your checkers into your home board, then bear them off the board before your opponent does

Game ends
When one player has borne off all 15 checkers, or when a player refuses a double. A match ends when one player reaches the agreed number of points, such as 5.

Setup

- Each player takes 15 checkers of one color, two dice and a dice cup. Put the doubling cube between you with the 64 facing up, which counts as 1.
- Count the points 1 to 24 from your own side. Your 1-point to 6-point are your home board. Your opponent counts the same way from their side.
- Set out your checkers, counting from your side: 2 on your 24-point, 5 on your 13-point, 3 on your 8-point and 5 on your 6-point. Your opponent does the same.
- Each player rolls one die, and a tie is rolled again. The higher number moves first, playing the two numbers just rolled.

How to play

- Move by each die.** Move your checkers from higher points toward your home board. Each die is a separate move: move two checkers, one by each number, or one checker by both if the point it stops on in between is open. Doubles, such as 4-4, are played four times.
- Land only on open points.** You may land on a point that is empty, holds your own checkers or holds one opposing checker. A point with 2 or more opposing checkers is closed to you.
- Use the whole roll.** Play both numbers if you can, and all four moves of a double. If only one number can be played, play it. If either could be played but not both, play the higher. If none can be played, your turn ends.
- Hit a blot.** A checker alone on a point is a blot. Landing on your opponent's blot hits it. The hit checker goes on the bar, the strip down the middle of the board.
- Enter from the bar.** With a checker on the bar, you must enter it before moving anything else. It enters your opponent's home board on the point matching a die, counted from their side: a 4 enters on their 4-point. If neither number can enter, you lose your turn.

- Bear off.** Once all 15 of your checkers are in your home board, you may bear them off the board. A 6 takes a checker off your 6-point, a 5 off your 5-point, and so on. A roll higher than your highest checker takes one off your highest point.
- Double the stakes.** Before rolling, you may offer to double the stakes. Your opponent either accepts, takes the cube and plays on, or refuses and loses the game at the stakes before the double. After that, only the player holding the cube may double.

Scoring

What a game is worth

How the game ends	Points	With the cube on 4
Single game: the loser has borne off at least 1 checker	1 times the cube	4
Gammon: the loser has borne off no checkers	2 times the cube	8
Backgammon: the loser has borne off no checkers and still has one on the bar or in the winner's home board	3 times the cube	12
A double is refused	The cube's value before the double	4, when a double from 4 to 8 is refused

Match play

Rule	What it means
Match length	Agree on a number of points, such as 5. The first player to reach it or pass it wins the match.
Points for each game	1, 2 or 3 times the final value of the cube, the same as in a single game
The Crawford rule	The first time either player gets to 1 point short of the match, the cube stays out of the next game
After the Crawford game	The cube is back in play for the rest of the match
Not used in matches	Automatic doubles, beavers and the Jacoby rule

You win a game by bearing off all 15 checkers first, or when your opponent refuses a double. In a match, the first player to reach the agreed number of points wins.

