

Draughts Rules Guide

A Beginner's Guide for Game Night

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PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	PIECES EACH
2	■ Easy to Learn	12

About This Game

Draughts (called checkers in America — same game, different name) is played on a standard 8×8 board using only the 32 dark squares. Each player commands 12 pieces, and the goal is to capture every one of your opponent's pieces, or leave them with no legal move at all. This guide covers everything needed to play a relaxed, casual game at a get-together or game night.

Setting Up the Board

Sit so you have a dark square in your near-left corner — that orients the board correctly. Each player takes 12 pieces of one colour and fills every dark square across their three nearest rows. That leaves the two middle rows empty as no-man's-land between the two sides. The darker pieces conventionally move first, then players alternate.

Every piece lives on a dark square, and every move stays on the dark squares — which is exactly why the whole game travels diagonally.

How the Pieces Move

- **Ordinary pieces (“men”)** — move one square diagonally forward onto an empty dark square. That's the whole rule: one step, diagonally, forwards, into a gap.
- No sideways moves, no straight moves, and no moving backwards for an ordinary piece — it only ever has a forward-left or forward-right option.
- Turns alternate, one piece moved per turn. There's no dice and no luck involved — every bit of information is sitting on the board in front of you.

Quick Tip

If a diagonal square is blocked by any piece — yours or your opponent's — that direction is closed to an ordinary move, unless a capture is on offer there instead.

Capturing — and Why It's Compulsory

If one of your pieces sits diagonally next to an opponent's piece, and the square immediately beyond it is empty, you can jump over it: land in the empty square and remove the jumped piece from the board.

If, after landing, that same piece can jump again straight away, it must keep going — a single turn can clear two, three or more enemy pieces in one move. This is called a multi-jump, and it's how games can turn around in an instant.

The rule that catches every beginner out: capturing is **compulsory**. If a jump is available to you, you must take it rather than making a quiet move instead. If more than one capture is on offer, you choose which — but you can't decline to capture altogether.

Getting Crowned: Kings

When an ordinary piece reaches the far row — the king row, closest to your opponent — it's promoted to a king, traditionally shown by stacking a second piece of the same colour on top.

A king can move and capture diagonally in **both** directions, forwards and backwards, while an ordinary piece stays locked moving forward only. A piece that reaches the king row ends its turn there even if it arrived by a jump — it can't keep capturing on the same move it's crowned. From the next turn on, though, it roams freely in all four diagonals.

How to Win

You win by achieving either of the following:

- Capturing every one of your opponent's pieces, or
- Leaving your opponent with no legal move on their turn — if all their remaining pieces are blocked, they lose even with pieces still on the board.

Common Beginner Mistakes

Forgetting that a capture is compulsory — if a jump is sitting there on your turn, you have to take it, even if it looks like a bad trade. Watch too for stopping a multi-jump early: once you land and another jump is available with the same piece, you must carry on.

A Few Friendly Strategy Tips

- **Control the centre.** Central pieces command more diagonals than pieces stuck on the side rail — push toward the middle early.
- **Hold your back row.** The two pieces guarding your own king row stop the opponent from crowning — keep them home as long as sensibly possible.
- **Use the compulsory rule to your advantage.** Offering a single piece can force a reply that opens up a bigger jump in return.

That's everything needed to sit down and play a full, proper game of draughts — simple enough to teach in a minute, with plenty of room to get better with every rematch.

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