

Snakes and Ladders Rules Guide

A Beginner's Guide for Game Night

PREMIER DISCO • GIANT GAMES & GAME NIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

PLAYERS	DIFFICULTY	BOARD
2+	■ Pure Luck	100 Squares

A Little History

Snakes and Ladders has genuinely ancient roots. It's believed to have originated in India, where it was called Moksha Patam, created — as tradition has it — by the 13th-century poet and saint Gyandev. Far from being just a children's pastime, it was originally designed to teach Hindu moral values: the ladders stood for virtues carrying a player upward, and the snakes stood for vices dragging them back down.

The game reached Victorian England in the late 19th century, where it picked up a new name and lost most of its original religious symbolism along the way. It crossed the Atlantic too — launching in America in 1943 under the name Chutes and Ladders, which is still the name most Americans know it by today.

The Official Rules

- 1 Each player places their counter on square 1, then everyone rolls the dice once — whoever rolls highest takes the first turn.
- 2 Players then take turns rolling the dice and moving their counter forward that many squares.
- 3 Land on a square showing the bottom of a ladder, and you climb straight to the top of it — skipping a row or more of squares in one go.
- 4 Land on a square showing the head of a snake, and you must slide all the way down to the square at the end of its tail.
- 5 The first player to land exactly on square 100 wins — “exactly” is the key word (see below).

Rolling a Six

Roll a six and you earn yourself an extra turn, on top of the move you just made. There's a limit, though: you're not allowed to roll three sixes in a row. If a third six comes up, it's voided and play passes straight to the next player instead.

Quick Tip

You must roll the exact number to land on square 100 — overshoot and your counter bounces backward by however many spaces were left over.

Finishing the Game

The final stretch is where Snakes and Ladders keeps its tension. To win, you must roll the exact number needed to land precisely on square 100 — no more, no less. Overshoot, and your counter bounces backward by however many spaces were left over.

For example: if you're sitting on square 99 and roll a 5, your counter moves one square to reach 100, and then bounces back the remaining four squares to land on square 96.

Is It a Game of Skill?

Not even a little — and that's rather the point. Once the dice leaves your hand, there isn't a single decision left to make; every square, ladder, and snake is entirely down to luck. That zero-choice format is exactly what makes it such a good first board game: nobody's experience or strategy gives them an edge, so a three-year-old has just as much chance of winning as anyone else at the table.

Why It's Great for Kids

Snakes and Ladders is often a child's very first proper board game, and it earns that place for good reason. Along the way it helps build:

- **Counting and numeracy skills**, from reading the dice to counting squares.
- **Language and vocabulary**, especially for younger players still learning number words.
- **Fine motor skills**, through handling the dice and moving counters accurately.
- **Turn-taking and patience**, waiting for your go and accepting a bad roll gracefully.
- **Social skills and relationship building**, playing alongside siblings, parents, or friends.
- **Family bonding time** — it's a genuinely easy game to gather round together.

Most children are ready for it from around age 3, by which point they can typically count to six, roll the dice themselves, and move their own counter to the right square.

Premier Disco

premierdisco.co.uk

premierdisco@gmail.com • 07548 281 129

Bringing games, ceilidhs, discos and quiz nights to events across Scotland since 1979