

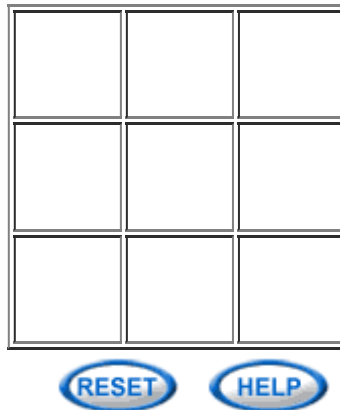


You probably already know how to play Tic-Tac-Toe. It's a really simple game, right? That's what most people think. But if you really wrap your brain around it, you'll discover that Tic-Tac-Toe isn't quite as simple as you think!

Tic-Tac-Toe (along with a lot of other games) involves looking ahead and trying to figure out what the person playing against you might do next.

## RULES FOR TIC-TAC-TOE

1. The game is played on a grid that's 3 squares by 3 squares.
2. You are **X**, your friend (or the computer in this case) is **O**. Players take turns putting their marks in empty squares.
3. The first player to get 3 of her marks in a row (up, down, across, or diagonally) is the winner.
4. When all 9 squares are full, the game is over. If no player has 3 marks in a row, the game ends in a tie.



## HOW CAN I WIN AT TIC-TAC-TOE?

To beat the computer (or at least tie), you need to make use of a little bit of strategy. Strategy means figuring out what you need to do to win.

Part of your strategy is trying to figure out how to get three **X**s in a row. The other part is trying to figure out how to stop the computer from getting three **O**s in a row.

After you put an **X** in a square, you start looking ahead. Where's the best place for your next **X**? You look at the empty squares and decide which ones are good choices—which ones might let you make three **X**s in a row.

You also have to watch where the computer puts its **O**. That could change what you do next. If the computer gets two **O**s in a row, you *have* to put your next **X** in the last empty square in that row, or the