

ZOLA

by Mark Steere

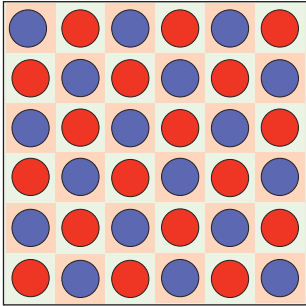


Figure 1 - Initial Setup.

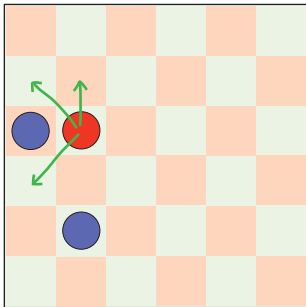


Figure 2 - Non-Capturing.

Red has only three available moves. Each move is non-capturing and moves his checker to an adjacent square which is further from the center of the board.

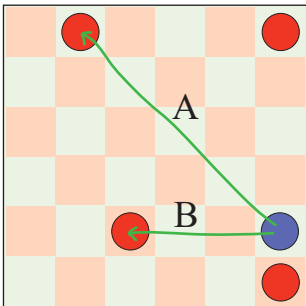


Figure 3 - Capturing.

Blue has only two available moves. Both moves are capturing. Move A moves his checker to a square equally distant from the center of the board. Move B moves his checker to a square closer to the center.

INTRODUCTION

Zola is a two player game played on a 6x6 (or 8x8...) checkerboard initially filled with a checkered pattern of red and blue checkers as shown in Figure 1.

The two players, Red and Blue, take turns moving their own checkers, one checker per turn, starting with Red. If a player has a move available, he must make one. If he has no moves available, he must sit the game out and wait until he does have a move available. At least one of the two players will always have a move available.

Draws cannot occur in Zola. Mark Steere designed Zola in February, 2021.

MOVE TYPES

There are two types of moves in Zola: non-capturing and capturing.

NON-CAPTURING MOVES

The non-capturing move is a king-like move to an adjacent (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally), unoccupied square. A non-capturing move must increase the straight line distance to the center point of the board. See Figure 2.

CAPTURING MOVES

The capturing move is a queen-like move along a straight (horizontal, vertical or diagonal) sequence of zero or more unoccupied squares terminating with an enemy occupied square. The enemy checker is removed and replaced with the capturing checker. A capturing move must maintain or decrease the straight line distance to the center point of the board. See Figure 3.

OBJECT OF THE GAME

To win you must capture all enemy checkers.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Feel free to publish this rule sheet and to program the game of Zola. No licensing fee or royalties are expected. However, please don't change the name or the rules, and please attribute the game to me, Mark Steere. My other games can be found at marksteeregames.com.

Zola is a crown jewel of my games. It is at once Simple, Robust (negligible* advantage in moving first), and Strategic (not just tactical). Zola's SRS index is exceedingly high. *The 4x4 board is an automatic win for Red. 6x6 is suitable for beginners. 8x8 should suffice for all but the most extreme experts.

Nobody designs games like I do. Not to suggest that my style is superior. Just unique. All of my games are finite. I.e., draws can't happen. They can't be forced or cooperatively induced. Draws simply can't happen. Why? Because I like the tension. Gameplay marches inexorably toward a decisive conclusion. Players can't shake hands and agree to both be "winners". Someone has to be defeated. Crushed. Annihilated. No deflating realization that you're caught in an endless move cycle. Such a game has failed you. Finally, it's a matter of aesthetics. I just don't like potential draws, however unlikely in play. Generally I don't like games where you have to calculate the score after play has concluded. But if there's an otherwise beautifully architected game that has score counting or even ties, I'm fine with that. Other designers don't have to follow my rules.

My only design imperatives are originality and architectural beauty. I use the simplest of equipment - the Checkers set and the Go set. What the Checkers set lacks in size, it makes up for with stacking and sliding. Classic engineering tradeoff. I don't particularly like the game of Checkers though, being draw prone, or its innumerable variants. I'm not overly concerned with gameplay except that my games should be robust. However, as fate would have it, Zola is a very interesting game to play.

I don't like knock-offs, spin-offs, or "with a twist" games. I especially dislike piece of s*** "designers" like Nick Bentley who "borrow" from my games without attribution (Bug employs a bastardized version of the highly original and unique Oust mechanism). In his ten page description of Bug's origins, the POS only attributes himself, claiming Bug "originated in the author's mind." Fortunately, honest designers greatly outnumber the lowlife bottom feeders. Corey Clark, for example, named his distantly related Faust to rhyme with Oust simply because Oust inspired his design.