

Focus (a.k.a. Domination)

**By Sid Sackson, first published in 1964
2 – 4 Players**

Domination is a unique new game of strategy that is ever changing and ever challenging because of its exciting play variations. It will take you a mere 5 minutes to learn the rules, but mastery of its strategy can take a lifetime.

Domination is a fast moving game played with interesting stacking playing pieces. Contact with opponent's playing pieces is immediate and you'll delight in the swift attack and conquer play.

Domination is as easy as Checkers and as challenging as Chess, yet with a method of its own. To play, just stack, attack and control the game board by moving one playing piece, a whole stack of them or even parts of a stack; the choice is yours.

Object:

Dominate the entire game board so your opponent cannot make a move.

Contents:

- Plastic game board unit
- 62 plastic playing pieces
- Colorful instruction booklet
- Label sheet

Basic game set-up:

Game board placement

Position the game board unit on a flat surface so it's accessible to all players.

Label application

Peel all the name labels and carefully apply them to the unit as shown in the front cover package picture.

Distribution and positioning of playing pieces

The color, number and placement of the plastic playing pieces differ in a 2-player, 3-player and 4-player game.

In a 2-player game, only the red and green pieces are used and each player is given 18 of each color to play with. In a 3-player game, 3 colors of playing pieces are used and each player is given 13 of each color to play with. In a 4-player game, all 4 colors of playing pieces are used and each player is given 13 of each color to play with. See individual set-ups for a 2-player, 3-player and 4-player game for more details.

Note to players:

The Instruction booklet is divided into 4 sections: “The game for two players”, “The game for three players”, “The game for four players” and “Strategy hints”. Read the rules carefully before attempting to play. Refer to the colorful illustrations to learn how to stack attack and “dominate” the game board. Have fun!

The game for two players

How to set up the game

The playing pieces – their number and placement

1. Only the green and red playing pieces are used - 18 of each color.
2. You and your opponent pick a color to play with.
3. ***To determine who plays first*** put a green piece in one fist and a red piece in the other fist. Have your opponent tap a fist. The color chosen plays first.
4. Position yourselves around the game board as shown in the figure below.
5. Set up the game board as shown in the figure below. The unique stacking pieces fit right over the domed game board spaces.

0 0 0 0
R R G G R R
0 G G R R G G 0
0 R R G G R R 0
0 G G R R G G 0
0 R R G G R R 0
G G R R G G
0 0 0 0

How to play the game

The playing pieces – how to move them

The basic move in “Domination” is to pile up your playing pieces onto other playing pieces to form stacks. If your color playing piece is on top of a stack, you control that stack, you “dominate” it, only you can move it. If your color is on top of all the stacks or piles on the game board and your opponent cannot move, then you’ll win the game. There are two basic moves you can make on your turn. Each is explained below.

The two basic moves:

On your turn, do ***one*** of the following moves. Once you make a move, your turn is over and play proceeds to your opponent. Alternate turns throughout the game!

1.) **Either make a single move** by moving one of your color playing pieces one space. Move it vertically, horizontally, but ***not diagonally*** one adjacent space either onto an empty, domed game space or onto a playing piece or stack of playing pieces. In other words, you can move it 1 space up or 1 space down or 1 space left or 1 space right.

Here are 4 possible moves for your single piece:

- A. Move it up (North) vertically 1 adjacent space, *for example onto an empty domed game space.*
- B. Move it down (South) vertically 1 adjacent space, *for example onto an opponent's single piece to form a 2-high pile.*
- C. Move it left (West) horizontally 1 adjacent space, *for example onto one of your own single pieces to form a 2-high pile.*
- D. Move it right (East) horizontally 1 adjacent space, *for example onto a 2-high pile controlled by an opponent's piece to form a 3-high pile.*

2.) **Or make a multiple move** by moving a pile of playing pieces or parts of a pile of playing pieces. To make a multiple move, you can only move a pile that has one of your color playing pieces topping it. You can only make a multiple move vertically and horizontally on the game board - ***never diagonally***. You can also jump over other pieces while moving and not affect them. The most important rule to remember when making a multiple move is ***the number of pieces you pick up in a pile to move determines how many spaces you can move on the game board***. Read through the following examples of possible moves. You are the green player in the example!

Making a multiple move with a 3-high pile: you control the 3-high pile because your green playing piece is on top. On your turn, you may make any of the following moves.

Important: in the example described, the maximum number of spaces you can move is 3, since there are 3 pieces in your pile. Remember, the number of pieces in a pile determines the maximum number of game spaces you can move.

Please note: the playing pieces you passed over or jumped over on your move are not affected in any way. They remain untouched and in place.

- A. Moving the entire pile: move the entire 3-high pile 3 adjacent spaces onto a 2-high pile to form a 5-high pile. *Your initial 3-high pile is now on top of the 2-high pile.*
- B. Moving the entire pile: move the entire 3-high pile 3 adjacent spaces onto a single opponent's piece to form a 4-high pile. *The opponent's piece is now at the bottom of the pile.*

Or Moving part of a 3-high pile: If you wish, you may move fewer spaces than the total number of pieces in a pile determined, this is called ***moving part of a pile***. To move part of a pile, lift off as many pieces from the top of the pile as the spaces you wish to move. Then move them. The remaining piece or pieces in a pile remain where they are.

Here are some examples of moving parts of a 3-high pile:

- C. Move the top 2 pieces of a 3-high pile 2 adjacent spaces to the left to land on an empty, domed space to form a 2-high pile. *The 2-high pile is now standing two spaces away from the remaining 1 piece.*

- D. Move the top 2 pieces of a 3-high pile 2 adjacent spaces to the right to land on a 2-high pile to form a 4-high pile. *The 4-high pile is now standing two spaces away from the remaining 1 piece.*
- E. Move the top piece of a 3-high pile 1 adjacent space to the left to land on a single, opponent's piece to form a 2-high pile. *You are now dominating the opponent's piece with your piece on top of his.*
- F. Move the top piece of a 3-high pile 1 adjacent space to the right to land on an empty adjacent game space to form a 1-high pile with a single playing piece of your own color.

Please note: in the examples C, D, E and F, the remainder of the original stack is now dominated the top color of that stack!

Reserve and captured pieces

Special pieces resulting from a move

When making either a single move or a multiple move, you may create a pile that is more than 5 pieces high. If you do so, any pieces in excess of 5 must be removed from the bottom of that pile for no pile on the board can be more than 5 pieces high.

These excess pieces are then captured, that is either removed from the play permanently, or kept in reserve to be played at a later time, depending upon who the pieces belong to and what color they are. See below for more details on captured and reserve pieces.

Which piece is a reserve? Which piece is a captured piece?

If you form more than a 5-high pile on a move, any excess pieces of your own color become valuable reserve pieces for you to use at a later time. Any excess pieces of your opponent's color are captured pieces and are permanently put out of the play.

Example of how to capture and reserve pieces:

The green player moves the entire 4-high pile 4 adjacent game spaces to the right to land on a 3-high pile to form a 7-high pile. Then the green player removes 2 excess pieces from the bottom of the pile so the stack is the maximum 5-high. This pile remains where it was moved. The 2 excess pieces then either become captured or reserve pieces.

The 2 excess pieces in the above example are 1 green one and 1 red one. The green piece is a reserve because it matches the color pieces of the player who initiated the move (the green player). This reserve piece is placed on the board itself, off the playing field (on top of the "Domination" label directly in front of the green player) so everyone can see it. It is a valuable piece to be used later in the game. The red piece, belonging to the green player's opponent, is the captured piece. It is set aside, away from the board and is out of play.

The use of reserve pieces

Reserve pieces are powerful pieces to own. On your turn, instead of making a single or multiple move, you may choose to play one of your reserve pieces. This is done by taking one of your reserve pieces and placing it anywhere on the game board on an empty space, on a playing piece or on a pile of playing pieces. Once you play a reserve piece your turn is over. You cannot play a reserve piece and move in the same turn!

Strategy hint: reserve pieces can be played anytime during the game. You may wish to amass reserve pieces and wait until the end of the game to play them and to top off strategically positioned stacks to control them and game board.

Recap of movement rules

- 1.) On your turn, you do one of the following:
 - A. Either make a single move
 - B. Or make a multiple move
 - C. Or play one of your reserve pieces.
- 2.) A move, whether it is single or multiple, can only be made in a straight line either vertically or horizontally, but never diagonally!
- 3.) When making a single move, you can only move a playing piece of your own color. When making a multiple move, you can only move a pile or part of a pile that has your color playing piece on top.
- 4.) In a multiple move, the number of pieces in the pile you wish to move determines the maximum number of spaces you may move that pile. You may, however, choose to move only a part of a pile.
- 5.) In a multiple move other playing pieces, piles of playing pieces, or empty game spaces, jumped over or passed over are not affected in any way and remain untouched.
- 6.) A move may end either on one playing piece, a stack of playing pieces or on an empty space.
- 7.) If a pile is formed with more than 5 pieces, any excess pieces over 5 are immediately removed from the bottom of the pile and become either captured or reserve pieces.

How to win a two-player game

Play as outlined above, alternating turn after each move until one player cannot move a pile or piece on the game board and has no reserve pieces. The game is then over! The winner is the player whose color “dominates” the game board, that is, he or she controls all the piles and pieces on the board.

Alternate win situation – Fast two-player game

The first player to capture 6 or more of his or her opponent’s pieces wins the game.

The game for three players

The playing pieces - their number and placement

- 1.) The green, red and blue playing pieces are used - 13 of each color.
- 2.) **To determine who plays first:** take one playing piece of each color, mix them up and pick one without looking at it. The chose color plays first.
- 3.) Position yourselves around the board and set up the pieces on the board as shown below. Each player positions 12 pieces on the board and keeps 1 **off the board**, as shown.
- 4.) **Order of play:** play proceeds clockwise around game board to the left of the first player.

```
    0 0 0 0
    R R B B G G
0 G G R R B B 0
0 B B G G R R 0
0 R R B B G G 0
0 G G R R B B 0
  B B G G R R
    0 0 0 0
```

How to play the game

The playing pieces...how to move them

- 1.) **First move:** each player, on his or her first move, must play his or her 13th playing piece - the off-the-board piece. They may be played on any **empty** game board spaces – **not on other pieces!**
- 2.) **Subsequent moves:** the 3-player game is played exactly like a 2-player game. On your turn, you may either make a **single move, a multiple move or play one of your reserve pieces.**

How to win a three-player game

Play as above until two players cannot move a pile or piece on the game board and have no reserve pieces. The game is then over! The winner is the player whose color “dominates” the game board and he controls all the piles or pieces on the board.

Alternate win situation - Fast three player game

The first player to capture at least 3 pieces from each opponent wins the game. Or the first player to capture at least pieces of any color, including his or her own reserve pieces, wins the game.

The game for four players – Individual or as Partners

The playing pieces – their number and placement

1.) The 4 colors of playing pieces are used - 13 of each color.

2.) **Individual or partner play:** decide whether you wish to play individually with each challenger playing against all others or partners with one team of 2 players against another team of 2 players.

Individual play: If you're playing this version each player chooses a color to play with.

Partner play: If you're playing partners, pick a teammate and your colors. The team colors are green and yellow versus blue and red. Each partner chooses one of the team colors for his or her own.

3.) **To determine who plays first:** take a playing piece of each color, shuffle them around in a pile and have one player pick one without looking. The chosen color plays first.

4.) Position yourselves around the game board as shown below. The yellow player sits at the top, the green player opposite of him. The red player sits to the right of the green player and the blue player to the left of the green player. When playing partners, teammates sit opposite one another. Set up the game board as shown below.

5.) **Order of play:** when playing individually or as partner, the order of play is the same. Play proceeds clockwise around the game board to the left of the player chosen to play first.

B B R Y
Y Y Y R Y R
B B B B R Y R Y
Y Y Y Y R Y R Y
G B G B G G G G
G B G B R R R R
B G B G G G
G B R R

How to play the game

The playing pieces – how to move them

The 4-player game, both the individual and partner versions, is played exactly like a 2-player game with the following additions.

- 1.) When playing partners, if you teammate makes a capture and reserve play and if any excess pieces match your color, these pieces are given to you as reserves.
- 2.) When playing partners, you may only move your own color playing pieces or piles topped with your own color pieces. You never can move your partner's color pieces.
- 3.) During the game, it is possible that you will not be able to make a play, either move a piece or pile on the game board or position a reserve piece. If this happens, you're still in the game. Just "pass" and wait until your next turn hoping that you can play then. You might be able to play on your next turn if part of a pile is moved by another player leaving one of your color pieces on top of the remaining pieces in that stack or if your teammate makes a capture and reserve play and give you a reserve piece of your own color.

- 4.) Players decide before play if “table talking” is allowed so certain plays can be initiated or stopped with prompting from other players. Of course, a no table-talk rule *heightens the intensity of the play!*

How to win a 4-player game

When playing partners, the game is over if both teammates cannot make a move on the game board and have no reserve pieces. The winner is the team whose color “dominates” the game board - that is, their color controls all the piles and pieces on the board.

When playing individually, the game is over when all other players except one cannot move a piece or a pile and have reserve pieces. The winner is the player whose color dominates the game board - that is, his or her color controls all the piles and pieces on the board.

Alternate win situation when playing individually – fast game

The first player to capture at least 2 pieces from each opponent wins the game. Or the first player to capture at least 10 pieces of any color, including his or her own reserve pieces, wins the game.

Strategy hints

- 1.) In “Domination” contact with other playing pieces is immediate. In the beginning of the game, you will stack up many 2-high piles. Try to arrange your 2-high piles in converging rows 2 spaces apart so they can quickly be stacked together to form a large pile that you control.
- 2.) Avoid moving into spaces between two or three of an opponent’s single pieces. Single pieces are dangerous, for they are just one jump away from controlling a stack.
- 3.) Two large piles in the same row can be an interesting situation. Beneficial to you if you can move first, attacking the other stack to make a capture and reserve play. Dangerous to you, if your opponent can attack first!
- 4.) Moving parts of piles can be advantageous to you. Move part of a pile when it is being threatened by attack from an opponent. Remember, any part move off remains in position on your next turn to be moved back onto the stack to control it (If an opponent doesn’t interfere with this moved-off part).
- 5.) Towards the end of the game, sometimes it is wise to try to concentrate on amassing reserve pieces rather than attacking an opponent. Reserve pieces are valuable pieces to own and can help you win the game.
- 6.) One valuable stack to be on the lookout for is a 5-high pile controlled by an opponent with one of your color pieces on its bottom. Play one of your reserves on such a stack – you’ll gain control of the stack and win back a reserve piece from such a move. Experience will teach you who will finally dominate.
- 7.) When playing partners, try the divide and conquer play in which both you and your teammate attack one and the same opponent. A player attacked by two challengers stands little chance of fending off his or her attackers.