

Root Down

by Martin Grider

2-player abstract - 30 min

Setup

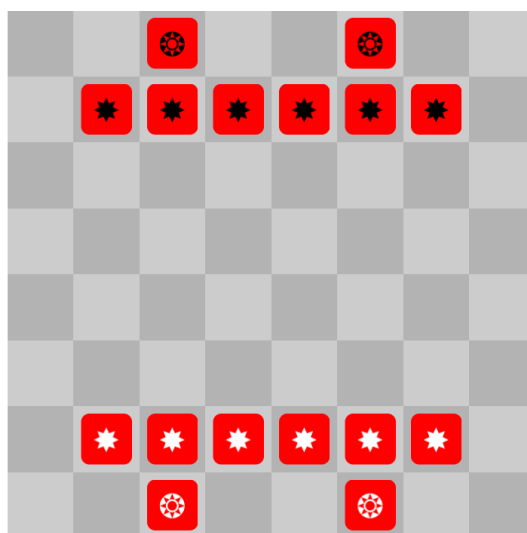
The game is played on a standard 8x8 square game board.

In the standard setup, each player has a set of 8 pieces in their color. These pieces can either be **roots**, or **kickers**.

Each player begins with 6 *kicker* pieces on the 2nd rank closest to their side of the board. (The two squares next to the edge of the board on that row will be empty.)

Additionally, each player starts with two *root* pieces on the 3rd and 6th rank of the row closest to the player. (C1 and F1 or C8 and F8 respectively in algebraic notation.)

Note that the standard setup can be modified if both players agree.



Gameplay

Piece Movement

Root pieces cannot be moved by either player.

Kicker pieces are **activated** when they are orthogonally or diagonally adjacent to a *root*. On your turn, you may move any *activated kicker* exactly as many spaces as the number of that player's other *activated kickers* next to any adjacent *roots*.

Kicker pieces may move in a straight line in any direction as long as they are not obstructed by other tiles. A *kicker* may never move through or land on any other piece. When a *kicker* is finished moving, it "puts its root down", and **kicks** all the other pieces around it. (See *Kicking Root Down* below.) Note that *kickers* that are not *activated* may never be moved.

Kickers can also be **diminished**, (indicated by slightly smaller piece size). A *kicker* can be both *activated* and *diminished*. When a *diminished kicker* moves, it will *kick it root down* as normal, and end its turn as a *root*.

Kicking Root Down

When an *activated kicker* finishes its movement, it becomes a *root*. Immediately, all pieces in the surrounding eight spaces (orthogonality and diagonally adjacent) will be "*kicked*". What happens when a piece is *kicked* depends on what kind of piece it is:

- 1) If the piece is a *root* owned by the player who just moved, that piece turns into an *activated kicker*.
- 2) If the piece is a *root* owned by the player's opponent, that tile becomes a *diminished kicker*.
- 3) If the piece is an opponent's *diminished kicker*, it is captured, removed from the game board, and kept by the capturing player for scoring at the end of the game.

Note that, at the end of a player's turn, after their piece *kicks it root down*, there will never be two *roots* adjacent to one another on the gameboard.

Game End

The game ends immediately if ever a player cannot take their turn because they have no *activated kickers* on their turn.

At that point, both players add the total of:

- 1) all the pieces they have captured during the course of the game, and
- 2) their *activated kickers* remaining on the gameboard.

Whoever's score is the greater wins the game. In the case of a tie for points, the last player to have been able to take their turn is the victor.

[[ref](#)]

History / Backstory

A month or so ago, Christian Freeling (creator of [Mindsports](#)) [started a contest on BGG in the Abstract Strategy forums](#) concerning "activator" games, or games with pieces that "activate" other pieces. The idea percolated in my brain a bit, and suddenly I found myself on the floor with my copy of [Card Chess](#), playtesting an idea or two.

I got enamored enough with the game that I wrote up the rules, and wanted to post them on BGG to get feedback, but I didn't have a name. I started thinking about the pieces in my game that activate, and how they sort of put out tentacles to the pieces next to them, kind of like roots on a tree. Eventually the Beastie Boys' [Root Down](#) popped into my head, and the name was set. Eventually I re-wrote the rules to incorporate "roots" and "kickers", and "kicking it root down" from the lyrics of that

song. I think it works pretty well, actually, for an otherwise themeless abstract. Eventually, I did [post the game to BGG](#). I have also submitted the game to the actual BGG database, where it is pending approval.