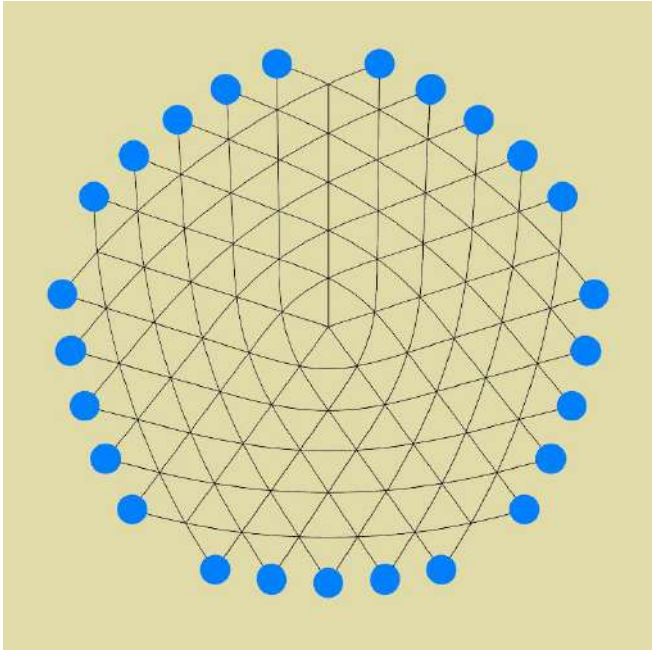
Bluestone

2025, Craig Duncan, https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/444241/bluestone



Game Idea

Bluestone is played by placing playing stones on a special pentagonal grid marked by "blue stones" on the perimeter. The goal is to connect to as many blue stones as you can using your own playing stones.

Rules

Placement: The first player on turn 1 places a single stone onto any empty intersection. Thereafter, starting with turn 1 for the second player, each player on his/her turn places two stones onto empty intersections, with the following restriction: the second placed stone may not be placed into the group of that player's stones which contains the first placed stone. If it is impossible to place the second stone in a different group, then that stone is forfeited.

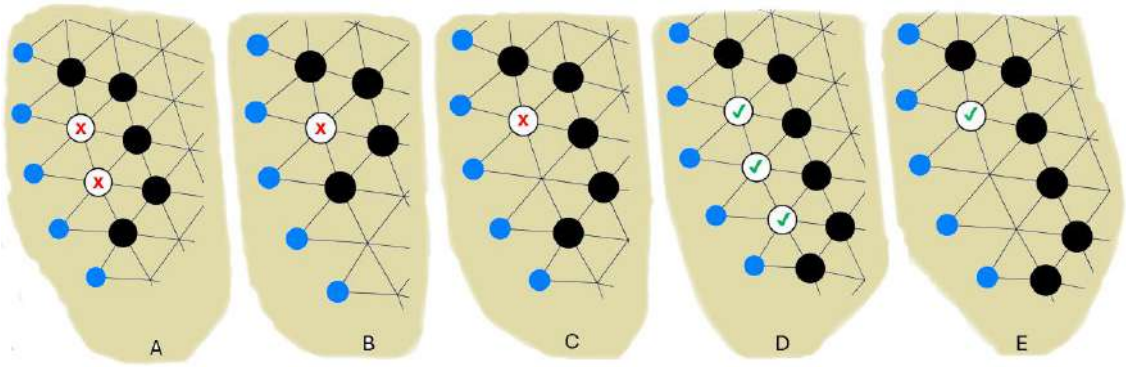
Group score: A group of connected same-color stones has a score equal to the number of blue stones that it connects to. (IMPORTANT: The number of stones in the group itself is irrelevant. A group of 20 stones that connects to 5 blue stones scores 5 points; a group of 6 stones that connects to 5 blue stones scores 5 points; etc.)

Capture: If a group of stones is surrounded by an enemy group in a way that makes it impossible for it to connect to at least FOUR blue stones, then that group is immediately captured and its stones are removed from the board.

Winning: Play continues until the board is full or both players pass in succession. At that point, the player with the highest scoring single group wins.(The sum total of all of a player's group scores is irrelevant.) If both players' highest scoring single groups are equal in score, then the players look to their remaining groups; the player with the highest scoring single group from among these remaining groups wins. If there is still a tie, then players keep comparing their remaining highest scoring groups "down the line" until the tie is broken. (It is impossible for group scores to be tied "all down the line.")

Final Scoring Example: Player A ends the game with groups scoring 10, 8, and 5; Player B ends the game with groups scoring 10, 8, 4, and 4. The players' first-highest and second-highest scoring groups are tied at 10 and 8 respectively. Player A wins the game with his/her third-highest scoring group, since this group scores 5 for A compared to 4 for B. (Note that the *total score* of all of a player's groups summed together -- in this case, 23 for A and 26 for B -- is irrelevant.)

Capture Examples



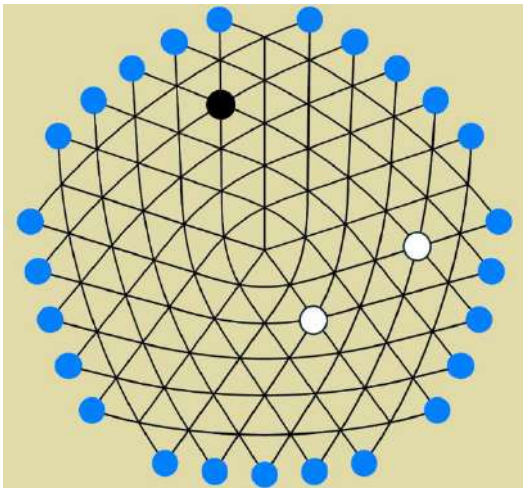
The white stones in Examples A, B, and C are all captured once the final black stone to complete the surrounding black group is placed. These stones are captured since there is no way for any of them to form a group that connects to four or more blue stones.

By contrast, the white group in Example D is permanently safe from capture, since it is connected to four blue stones.

The white stone in Example E is safe for now, since in principle it is still possible for it to form a group that connects to four blue stones. However, it will do so only if white stones are played at each of the two adjacent empty points. Thus, if a black stone is played at either of those points, then it will no longer be possible for the white stone to form a safe group, and as a result the white stone will be captured.

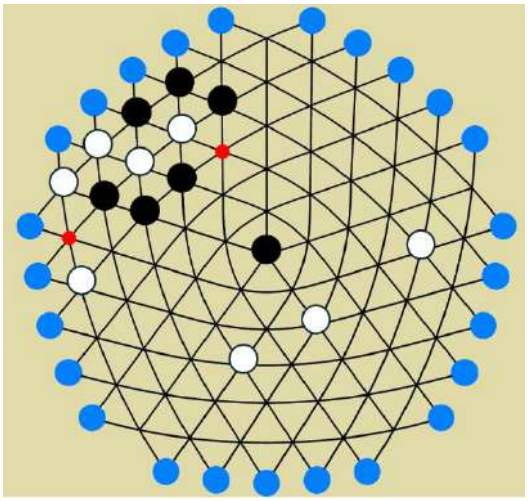
EXAMPLES OF PLAY

Example 1



Above is a board after the first turn. Black played first, and thus played only *one* stone. White played next and played *two* stones. On all subsequent turns each player will play *two* stones to the board. (The first player gets just one stone on turn 1 in order to offset the advantage of playing first, and thereby make the game fairer for the second player.)

Example 2

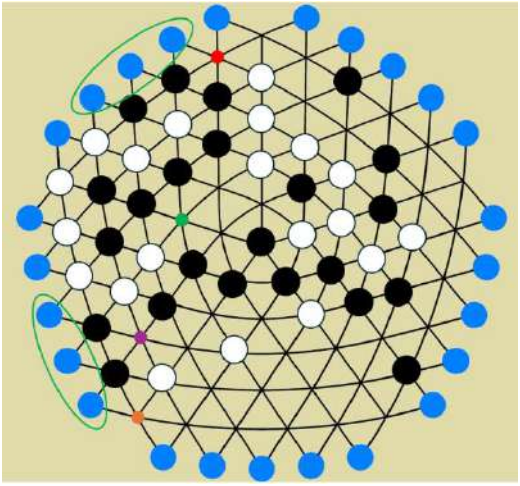


The game has continued. Note that in theory Black would love to place a stone at each of the intersections marked with the red dots. That would surround White's group and thereby capture it, since that white group then could not connect to four blue stones.

However, Black cannot place a stone on each red dot in the same turn, since those stones would then belong to the same black group, which the rules forbid. Black

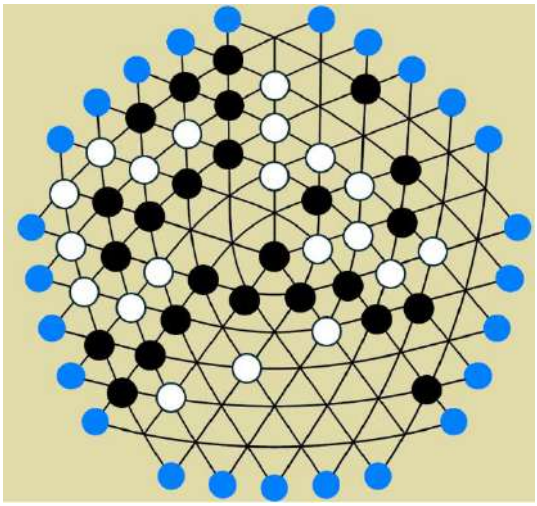
can at most play at one red dot in a given turn, and place the second black stone elsewhere such that it does not belong to the same black group as the first stone.

Example 3

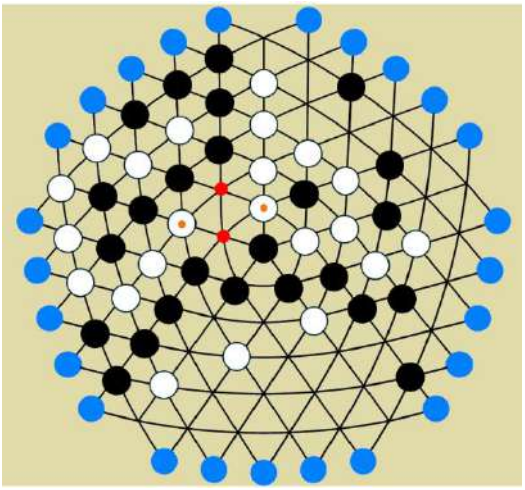


Later on it is Black's turn to play to the board above. Black's group in the upper left currently connects to only 3 blue stones (circled). Black's group in the lower left also currently connects to only 3 blue stones (circled). So, both groups are at risk of being captured by White.

Ideally, Black would like to place a black stone at the green dot and at the purple dot; that would join the two vulnerable groups together into one large group with the black stones in the board's center. However, that would be to illegally play the second stone into the same group as the first stone. Black, though, has several other choices. Black opts to play at the red and purple dots. After placement the board is as follows:

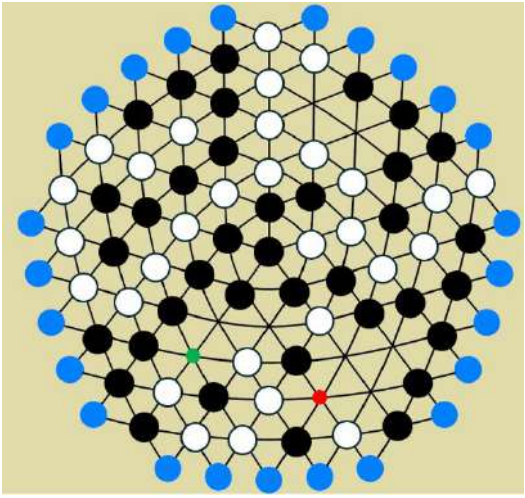


Now it is White's turn. White plays the two stones marked with the orange dots:



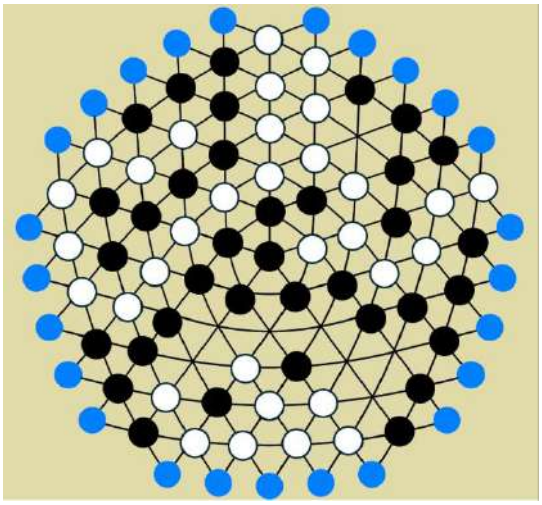
This is legal since the two white stones belong to separate groups. White's reason for playing these stones is to guarantee a connection between the two large white groups. Although these groups are not yet connected after White's current placements, Black will be unable to separate the two white groups in a single turn, since doing so would require Black to place a stone at each red dot in violation of the "no same group" placement rule. At most, Black can in a single turn play a stone on one red dot. In that case, though, on White's next turn White can play a stone at the other red dot and connect the two large white groups.

Example 4



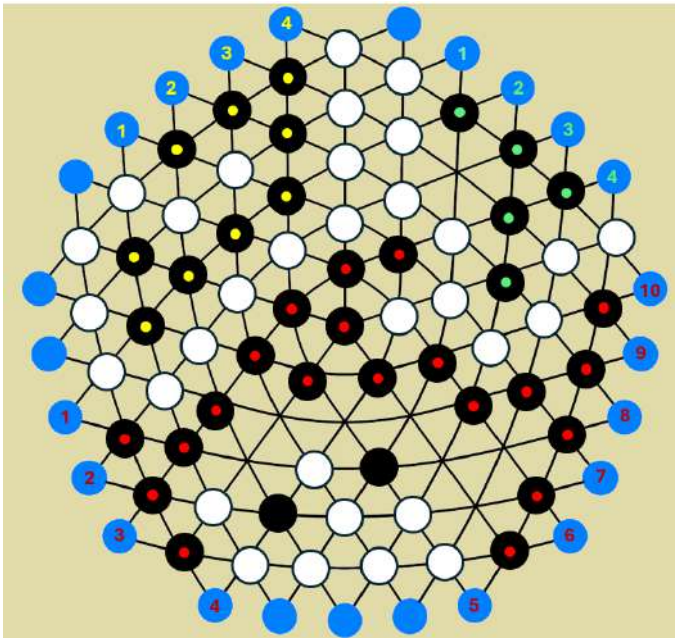
The game eventually reaches the board state above, with White to play. White has two capturing options: White can capture a black stone by playing to the green dot, or to the red dot, but not both (since that would violate the "no same group" placement rule). The choice is clear: White should play at the red dot since only that black stone has the potential to score. White thus plays one of White's two allotted stones there.

Example 5

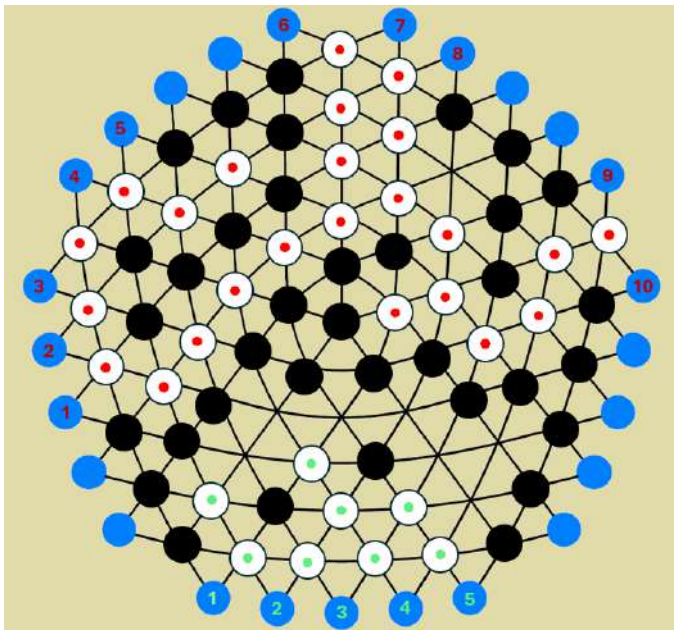


Play continues until no further scoring opportunities remain. The board's final state is as above. There is no need to fill in non-scoring empty intersections, so both players pass. It is time to count the scores. Black's group scores are 10, 4, and 4. White's group scores are 10 and 5. There is a tie for highest single scoring groups at 10 points each. So, the players compare their next highest scoring groups, and White wins this comparison 5 to 4. Thus, White wins the game.

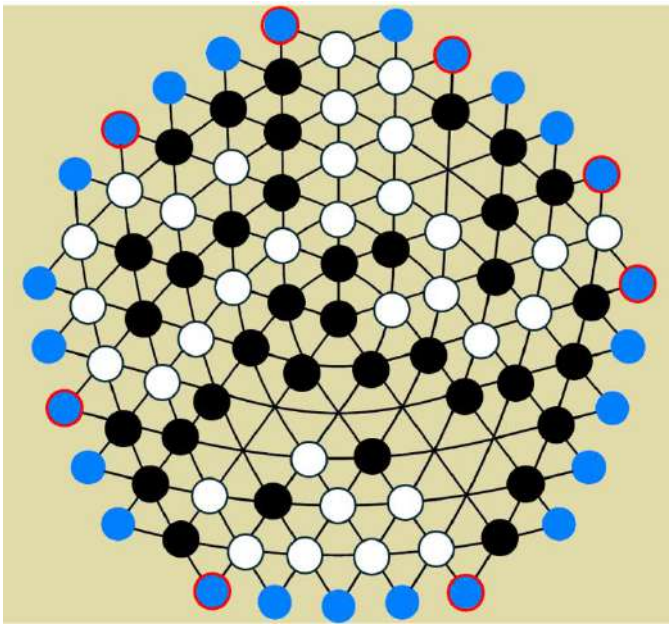
Below are Black's groups and scoring blue stones marked. The black group marked with red connects to 10 blue stones and thus scores 10 points. The black group marked with yellow connects to 4 blue stones for 4 points, as does the black group marked with green. (**IMPORTANT**: The colored dots on the black stones in the image below – i.e. the red, yellow, and green dots – do NOT represent points scored. Only blue stones score points for a group. So, for instance, there are 20 red dots below since there are 20 black stones in one group. However, that black group scores 10 points, not 20 points, since that group connects to 10 blue stones, namely, the blue stones labeled 1 - 10 in red numbers. Similar remarks apply, of course, the black groups denoted by green dots and yellow dots, and the white groups in the image after next. In short: only blue stones score; the size of the group connecting to the blue stones is irrelevant.)



Below are White's groups and scoring blue stones marked. White has one group worth 10 and another worth 5. Note that White has won the game despite having one less scoring group than Black, and despite White having a smaller total score when all group scores are summed (namely 15 for White vs. 18 for Black). That does not matter. All that matters is who has the highest single scoring group that is unmatched by an opponent group.



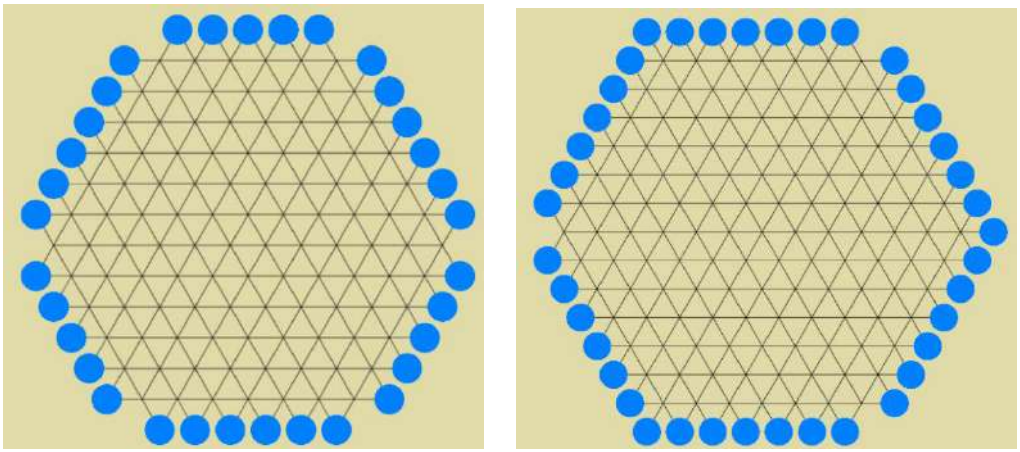
Finally, note that blue stones needn't be uniquely owned. For instance, the blue stones circled in red below each score one point for both Black and White.



Alternative Boards

Bluestone can be played on different size pentagonal boards. (See the sample boards at the end of this document). Bluestone can also be played on other shapes of boards, provided there is an odd number of blue stones in total. (With an even number of blue stones, ties are possible.)

For instance, the following are examples of six-sided Bluestone boards:



The board on the left is known as a “limping” board since its sides are uneven (i.e. half its sides are 6 blue stones long and half are 7 blue stones long). The board on the right is a “hexhex” board. Its playable area is symmetrical, since it has seven playable perimeter intersections on each of the six geometrical sides. However, note that three of the corner intersections connect to 3 blue stones and the other three corner intersections connect to 2 blue stones – an asymmetry in scoring opportunities that creates some tactical differences from the limping and pentagonal board.

The advantage of the pentagonal board is that it offers full geometrical symmetry, with each point playable perimeter intersection connecting to exactly two blue stones. However, the alternative limping and hexhex boards present some enjoyable variety.

Additional printable board files are available here:
https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/444241/bluestone/files

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Joao Neto for design advice and playtesting, to Evan Variano for playtesting, and to Cameron Browne for vital assistance with the computerized production of the pentagonal boards.

Ref: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xWrOEW3vB_aqVFXiofKTU2pbNO-pXj3jq1u-Co9jkQs/edit?tab=t.0