

Dohyō

2020, Phil Leduc, <https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/2562446/new-game-dohyo>

Dohyō is an abstract game lightly themed on sumo wrestling. Players take turns pivoting their pieces around each other and pushing their opponent's tokens in an attempt to shove them out of the sumo ring, the dohyō.

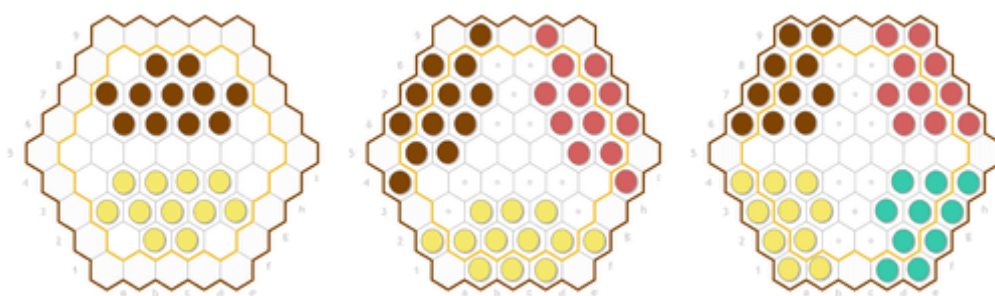
All moves are performed using two adjacent owned pieces. A player's piece can swing around an adjacent owned piece, the pivot piece, through empty spaces but may not jump over any other pieces or pass outside the dohyō's border. A player can also use two adjacent pieces to push a single aligned opponent piece into an empty space or outside the sumo ring. In the latter case, the opponent's piece is removed from the board. If possible, pushing is mandatory! To win, a player must either push a given number of opponent pieces off the board or stalemate his or her opponents. The game plays best with two players but can be played with three or four players.

The game of Dohyō requires:

- Four sets of 12 playing pieces and
- A 5 x 5 x 5 hexagonal board.
- One tie-breaker token

Setup

The two-player game is played on a 4 x 4 x 4 hexagonal board, as indicated by a gold border line on the game board, using two sets of eleven pieces. Refer to Figures 1 to 3 for game starting positions. The tie-breaker token is given to the last player to play in the first round. Please note that the set ups for the three- and four- player games may change - more play testing is needed.



setups for 2, 3, 4 players

Rules of Play

Starting with the "lighter" player, on each turn a player must perform a push or a pivot action. See below for more details. A player may not pass a turn. Player turns go clockwise around the table, or alternate for two players.

Note that if possible, the push action is mandatory. If a player cannot push or pivot, that player is eliminated and will no longer take any further actions. The eliminated player's pieces remain on the board.

Push: A pair of adjacent owned tokens can push a single opponent piece. The opponent token must be aligned with and adjacent to the pair and there must be an empty cell or the edge of the arena that is immediately beyond the opponent token. All three pieces move a single cell in the direction of the push.

Players may not push their own tokens and may not simply shift their tokens without pushing an opponent token.

If an opponent piece is pushed out of the arena or if an opponent is stalemated by a push move, *the active player takes possession of the tie-breaker token*.

Push Priority

In a two-player game, if multiple opportunities to push exist, the player is free to choose between them.

In a three- or four-player game, if multiple opportunities to push one or more opponent pieces exist, the player must choose to push one of these opponent pieces based on who is nearest to the active player in the clockwise direction around the board.

For example, assuming the players are number 1, 2, 3, and 4 clockwise around the board, with player 1 active, if no player 2 pieces can be pushed, two player 3 pieces can be pushed and one player 4 piece can be pushed, then player 1 is obliged to push either of player 3's two pieces.

Another example, if player 3 can push pieces belonging to each of the other players, player 3 must choose to push a player 4 piece and can choose among two or more player 4 pieces if they exist.

Pivot: If the active player cannot push an opponent piece, the player must perform a pivot move. A token may move around an adjacent owned piece, in either a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction, any number of empty cells but may not pass over any cells outside the arena border or over any other piece. Moving a piece back to its starting location is not allowed.

Refer to Figures 4 through 6 for example push and pivot moves.

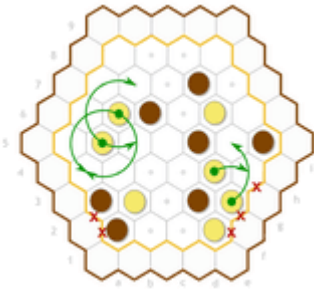


Figure 4. Pivot Moves

The yellow tokens indicated by the green dots can perform pivot moves. The moving token must travel along the green arc passing through the token. In this figure, there are no other pivot moves available. The red x's indicate that the brown and yellow tokens along the border may not revolve around each other because in doing so the moving token would have to travel outside the arena border.

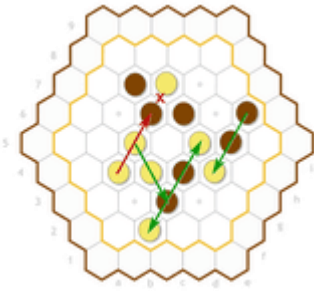


Figure 5. Push Moves

The green arrows identify all the possible push moves that can be made in this board state. Note that several pairs of tokens cannot push because there is no empty space behind the opponent's token, see c4 to f7 for example.

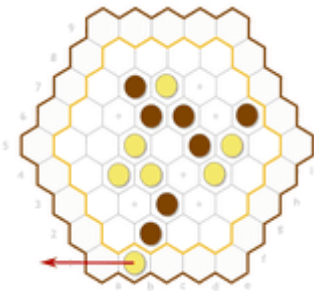


Figure 6. After a Push

Note that only two of the brown tokens move during the push. One brown token is left behind. The pushed yellow token is removed from the board and is out of the game.

Winning the Game

There are three ways to win.

- By knockout: A player wins as soon as he or she pushes 9, 10, or 8 opponent tokens out of the arena for the two-, three- and four-player games respectively. Games can be shortened by choosing a lower capture requirement. For example, new players may want to play to just 6 or 7 tokens captured.
- By submission: A player wins if, *at the start of his or her turn*, all his or her opponents are unable to move. This occurs when all the opponents' remaining pieces are isolated singletons, pinned, or captured. In Figure 4, Yellow wins because Brown is unable to move.
- By the ref: If no captures are made for 24 rounds of play, the players are playing defensively. In this case, the player in possession of the tie-breaker token wins the game at the end of the ninth round of passive play.

Designer Comments

Dohyō has similarities to the game Abalone, a popular pushing game with its own steadfast following and dedicated web site. Abalone is a popular game, despite the flaw of turtling or passive, repetitive play which can bring the game to a standstill when either player chooses to do so. My original design of Dohyō exhibited this same flaw. To counter defensive play, pushing went from being an option to being mandatory. Of course, both players could decide to stall the game in the hopes that the other player will make a misstep, but if one player decides to play aggressively that player can more easily take control of the game. Dohyō becomes more transparent and predictable. It is hoped that players find this solution to be elegant and sufficient.