Droplets (2-players only)

A game by Ben Morayta

👤 2 players 🕐 20-30 min 👥 ages 10+

Contents

- 43 double-sided board tiles
- 2 sets of 35 droplets each
- Active player marker

Overview

Droplets is an abstract game of strategic placement and area control, where you need to plan not only where your next droplet will drip, but also every chain reaction it will trigger around.

You place two droplets at a time on any of the dripping spaces. As droplets accumulate, they *splash* to adjacent spaces. In turn, those can cause a series of other splashes, but not always in your favor, and not always under your control.

The player that splashes the most droplets onto the fountains at the edge of the board **wins the game**.

Board
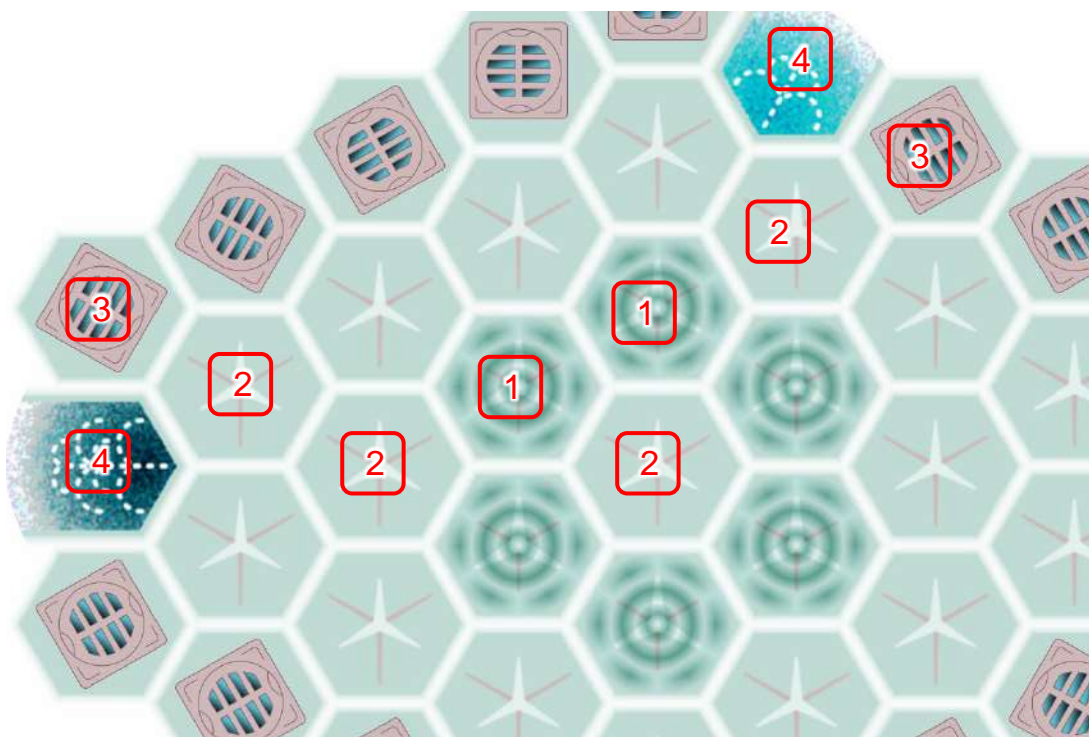

There are 4 types of space on the board:

1. **Dripping**: The 6 spaces around the center space where you're allowed to place new droplets.
2. **Transition**: The spaces around the dripping area, and the center space. They don't have any effect and you can't directly place any droplets in them, but you can splash through them.
3. **Drain**: All spaces around the board except for the fountains. When your droplets splash onto those spaces, they produce no points, and won't move again, but they can trigger the end of the game.
4. **Fountain**: When your droplets splash onto the fountains, they will give you victory points. 2-point fountains are illustrated with a double-splash and darker color. 3-point ones have a triple-splash (not on this board).

Setup

Create the board by assembling the tiles in the configuration shown here (or choose a configuration from the Alternative Boards section).

Each player takes all the droplets in the chosen color, as their supply.

Give the current player marker to the first player.
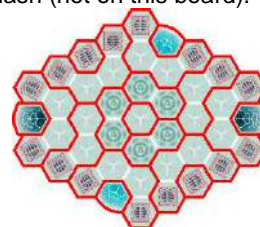
Player's Turn

1. To start your turn, place **two of your droplets** from the supply onto any of the dripping spaces on the board.
   a. You must place both droplets before any other step/movement.
   b. You cannot place a droplet onto a space that is in a *triggered splash* state (see *Splashing*).
2. If any **splashes are triggered**, resolve all the ones that you control (see *Splashing*), including new ones.
3. The other player must **resolve all the splashes that they control**, including new ones.
4. If you had to skip any splashes (see *Skipping*), or if new splashes that you control were triggered by the other player, the turn order continues with you, in the same fashion.
5. Only when there are no more splashes left on the board, pass the **current player token** to the other player, who will start a new turn on step 1.

Splashes can be triggered by you or the other player. This might mean that both get to resolve several rounds of splashes before the current player token is passed, and they start their turn by placing new droplets.

Splashing

A splash is triggered when the space has 3 droplets.

Droplets splash onto *adjacent* hexes as evenly as possible.

- Move one droplet to an adjacent hex, then skip the next hex clockwise, then move one to the hex clockwise from the skipped one, and so on. You can use the 3-point stars as a guide, all droplets splash to the points of the same star.
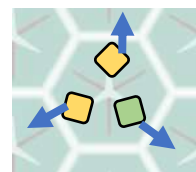
Control

Regardless of who has the current player token, the player with 2 or more droplets of their color is the one that *controls* the splash and decides which droplet splashes to which adjacent space (i.e. if you place a droplet on a dripping space with two cubes of the other player's color, they will control it, even if your droplet triggered the splash).

- The player that controls decides which droplet splashes to which adjacent hex, even the other one's droplets.
- You can resolve splashes in any order, even resolving ones that were just triggered before others that were there before, but you must resolve *all* the splashes that you control before the other player resolves theirs.
- *Only when* a splash can't be resolved, you can skip it (see *Skipping*), letting the other player resolve theirs before you can resolve the skipped one(s).

Skipping

You can't splash *any* droplets onto a space in a *triggered splash* state (that is, with 3 droplets).

- In some cases, this forces you to splash in an inconvenient direction. You *must* still resolve this splashing.

  The yellow player wants to resolve this splash to the *fountain*, to score a point, but since the space with the green player's tokens is in a *triggered splash* state, yellow is forced to resolve towards the *drain*.
  Because of this, she not only doesn't score a point, but she will also lose one droplet into the drain.

- If no option is *valid* for a splash after resolving all your other splashes, you must *skip it* and *pass* control to the other player, waiting for them to resolve *their* splashes until you can resolve the skipped one(s).

  The yellow player is resolving his splashes, but since both options have a space already in a *triggered splash* state, yellow is forced to skip his splash.
  Green will resolve theirs. Since both splashes have one option *blocked* because of yellow, they both must resolve to the other option.

- If two or more splashes become *deadlocked*, where none of them can be resolved without the other(s) resolving first (i.e. after both players *passed* without resolving any splash), *all droplets* from *all unresolved splashes* are removed from the board and returned to the players' supplies.

  In this example, the yellow player can't resolve the splash, as both options are in a *triggered splash* state, but green finds themself in the same situation with both splashes.
  Since none of them can be resolved, all 9 droplets are eliminated from the board, and returned to each player's supply.

Drain / End of Game

Drains don't splash, even if they contain several droplets of the same color. Droplets that fall in them will not move again, and don't give any points.

When the 4th droplet is splashed onto the same drain space, the **end of game** is triggered. The *current turn* continues until all triggered splashes are resolved, and then all players count their points.

Fountain / Winner

Fountains can contain any number of droplets without splashing. Droplets in them will not move again.

In the standard board, droplets in the fountains closest to the center are worth 1 point, and droplets in the fountains on the extremes of the board are worth 2 points.

The player with the **most points** at the end of the game is the **winner**.

In the case of a **tie**, in turn order and starting with the next player after the end of the game, players will place 2 droplets each turn. The player whose droplet *first reaches* a fountain is the **winner**.

Pebbles Variant

This variant adds a moveable strategic element to the control of some of the spaces on the board, as well as a constraint when directing the splashing. **Pebbles** are *neutral pieces* that never leave the board.

Additional Components

- 6 pebble pieces (or as many as the dripping spaces in the chosen board)

Setup

Assemble the board, and place 1 *pebble* onto each dripping space (6 total for the standard).

Splashing

To determine if a space splashes, pebbles must be considered droplets of the *current player*.
This means that whenever there are 2 droplets in addition to the pebble, the space will splash.

The pebble will always count as a droplet of the *current player*, *not* of the player currently splashing.
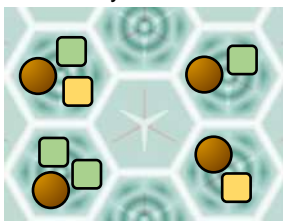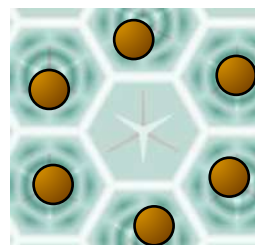
In this example, the current player is **yellow**.

Both spaces on the left side are in a *triggered splash* state:
Top-left contains a yellow droplet *and* the pebble, which counts as yellow. Yellow controls the splash
Bottom-left contains two green droplets and the pebble, green controls this splash.

The spaces on the right are *not triggered*, and would need another droplet in them to even be considered.

A pebble:

- Can never move onto a drain or onto a fountain.
- Can never move onto a space with another pebble.
- Can never be removed from the board.
- As with droplets, it can never splash onto a space that is in a *triggered splash* state.

Because of these restrictions, a pebble will affect how splashes are handled.

- In some cases, it might force you to splash in a direction that is inconvenient to you. You *must* still resolve it if there's a *valid* splash.
- In case none of the options allow for a *valid* splash after you have resolved all your other splashes, you must skip it and *pass* control to the next player, as regular.
- If a splash with a pebble becomes *deadlocked*, where it cannot be resolved (i.e. after both players *passed* without resolving any splash), all droplets from the unresolved splash are removed from the board and returned to the players' supplies. *The pebble remains on the space*.

Every other rule of the base game applies.

Drain Rewards Variant

This variant adds a reward to the first player whose droplet goes into each drain. **Reward Tokens** present an advantage unknown to other players, that can be used at any time.

Additional Components

- 20 drain reward tokens

Setup

Shuffle all the drain reward tokens face down. After assembling the board, place 1 *token* randomly onto each drain space. Return the leftovers to the box, without looking at them.

Drain

When one of *your* droplets is the first to go into a drain (one that still contains a reward token), take the token into your hand, regardless of if you were controlling the splash or not.

Other droplets that go into the same drain later don't receive any rewards.

Drain Reward Tokens

Tokens should be kept secret from other players, but you may look at them at any time.

- Tokens can be spent at any moment in the game to perform their action, including when it's not your turn.
- You must announce your intention before a movement takes place (i.e. you can't stop another player from completing an action once they started it).
- Spent tokens are discarded / returned to the box.

Extra droplet

Spend this token to place one extra droplet from your supply onto a dripping space on the board.

Remove droplet

Spend this token to remove any droplet from a dripping or a transition space on the board.

This *cannot be used* to remove droplets from fountains or drains.

Drip on a transition space

Spend this token to allow placement of a droplet on a transition space instead of a dripping space.

This token *doesn't give you extra droplets* to place but may be used together with the *extra droplet* token.

Control splash

Spend this token to take control of a splash on a triggered space.

You don't need any droplets in the space to take control but must distribute the droplets already in that space and cannot add any.

Shorter/Longer Game Variants

If you want to play a shorter game, you can change the *End of Game* trigger to the 3rd droplet in a single drain space.

For a longer game, the *End of Game* is triggered on the 5th droplet in a single drain space.
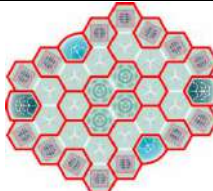
All the rest of the rules remain unchanged.

Alternative Boards

These are alternative configurations of the board that have been tested and balanced. Next to each configuration you'll find notes in how they differ in gameplay vs. the standard board, as well as which variants can be used.
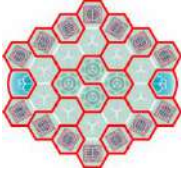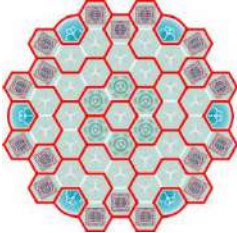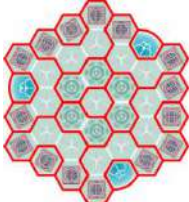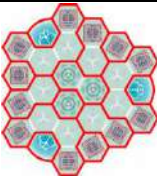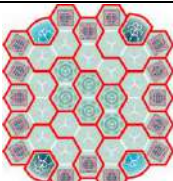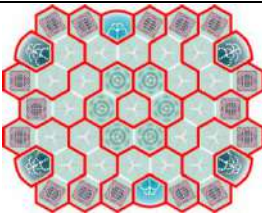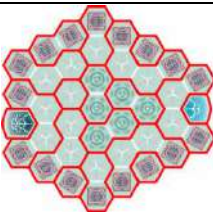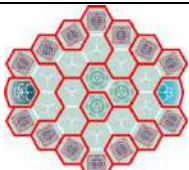
These are suggestions. You may build your own custom configuration using the tiles.

Additional Rules

NOTE: some *transition* or *dripping* spaces on some board configurations are at the edge (i.e. with one or more sides not touching any other space). When you splash a droplet and it would land on the table, simply return it to your supply. Those don't count for End of Game conditions or for points.

	Standard Players: 2-5 Time: 20-30 min		**Small Standard** Players: 2-3 Time:

	Reduced Small Standard Players: 2-3 Time:		**Symmetrical** Players: 2-5 Time: 45-60 min
	Small Symmetrical Players: 2-5 Time:		**Reduced Small Symmetrical** Players: 2-5 Time:
	Triangle Players: 2-5 Time:		**Small Triangle** Players: 2 Time:
	Square Players: 2-3 Time:		**Asymmetrical Square** Players: 2-4 Time:
	Rectangle Players: 2-5 Time:		**Large Asymmetrical** Players: 2-5 Time:
	Reduced Asymmetrical Players: 2-4 Time:		**Small Reduced Asymmetrical** Players: 2 Time:
	Swirl Players: 2 Time:		**Hyperasymmetrical Swirl** Players: 2-5 Time:

CREDITS

Game Design/Graphic Design: Ben Morayta

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