



## Condensed Rules Sheet

**Tak** is a board game from Patrick Rothfuss' bestselling novel, *The Wise Man's Fear*. It is an elegant two-player game of perfect strategy, a refined diversion from the court of Vintas:

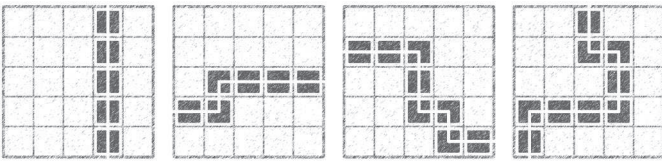
*"Tak is the best sort of game: simple in its rules, complex in its strategy. Bredon beat me handily in all five games we played, but I am proud to say that he never beat me the same way twice."*

-Kvothe

When the book was written, Tak was intriguing but imaginary. Now, Patrick Rothfuss and James Ernest have teamed up to make it real. Introducing **Tak: A Beautiful Game**.

## Object of the Game

The goal of Tak is to build a *road*, which is a string of pieces that connects opposite sides of the board. Some examples:



*Some examples of winning roads*

The game also ends if either player runs out of pieces, or if the board is completely full. In that event, the winner is the player with the most flat stones on top. More details on this below.

## The Board

The board is a simple grid, like the ones pictured above. You can play Tak on many different sizes of board, from 3x3 to 6x6 and even larger.

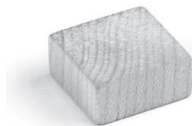
Spaces on the Tak board are connected only by their edges. Spaces are not adjacent diagonally, and pieces do not move diagonally.

## The Pieces

There are two types of piece in Tak: *stones* and *capstones*. Stones can be played in two ways: *flat* or *standing*.

**Flat Stones:** Usually, stones are played flat, as shown here. Flat stones can stack up, and they can count as part of a road.

*Note: The dark and light stones in some sets may have different shapes. This is purely decorative.*



**Standing Stones:** You can place a stone on end, as shown here. Nothing can be stacked on a standing stone, but standing stones don't count as part of your road. This makes them good for blocking, so they are sometimes called "walls."



**Capstones:** Capstones combine the best aspects of standing and flat stones: they *do* count as part of a road, but they *can't* have another piece stacked on top. In addition, a capstone by itself has the power to *flatten* a standing stone.



## Setting Up

The board starts empty. Check that each player has the right number of stones and capstones for your chosen board size.

Board Size:	3x3	4x4	5x5	6x6	8x8
Stones:	10	15	21	30	50
Capstones:	0	0	1	1	2

In the first game, determine randomly who will go first. After that, you will take turns going first.

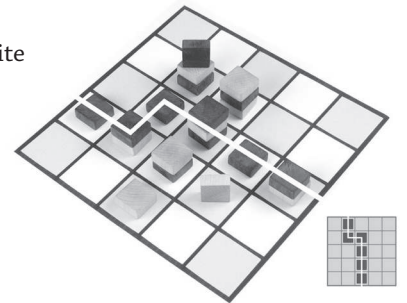
On the first turn of the game, each player places one of their *opponent's* stones. You may play this stone in any empty space, and it must be flat. After this, play proceeds normally.

*For example, if White goes first, White plays a Black stone, then Black plays a White stone, then White takes the first normal turn.*

## The Goal

The object is to create a *road*, which is a string of your pieces that connects opposite sides of the board. A road does not have to be a straight line. Diagonal spaces do not connect. Standing stones cannot be part of your road, but your capstone can.

In this illustration, Black has won by connecting two opposite sides of the board with a road. Each space along this path has a stack with a black flat stone on top. The road could also include Black's capstone.



## Other Ways to Win:

**Flat Win:** If either player runs out of pieces, or if the board is completely full, then the game ends immediately and the player with the most flat stones wins.

Count only the flat stones on top of stacks, not those buried within stacks. If this count is tied, then the game is a draw.

**Double Road:** If a player creates a winning road for both players in the same move, then the *active* player is the winner. (This is possible, but very rare.) *For example, if White makes a move that creates a white road and a black road, then White wins because it is White's turn.*

## On Each Turn

On your turn you may either *place* a piece in an empty space, or *move* one of the stacks under your control.

**Place:** You can place a flat stone, a standing stone, or your capstone in any *empty space* on the board. (You never play a piece directly on another one. Stacks form only as a result of movement.)

If you place your last piece, or if you fill the last space on the board, the game ends immediately.

**Move:** You can move one or more pieces in a stack that you control. A “stack” of pieces can be any height, including just one piece. “Control” means that your piece is on top.

To move the stack, take any number of pieces off the top, up to the *carry limit* (see below), and move them in a straight line, dropping *at least one piece* off the bottom in each space along the way. The pieces that you drop will cover up any stacks that are already there.

The simplest move is to take one piece and move it one space. Taller stacks can move farther, dropping pieces as they go.

### Additional Movement Rules

**Carry Limit and Stack Height:** There is no limit to the height of a stack, but there is a limit to the number of pieces that you can *move*. This “carry limit” is equal to the width of the board, so for example in a 5x5 game, you can carry no more than five pieces. That means if you start with a stack of 7, you must leave at least 2 of those pieces in the starting space.

**Insurmountable Pieces:** Standing stones and capstones cannot be covered, which means that all the spaces in your path must either be empty or contain flat stones.

**Flattening Walls:** A capstone can, by itself, move onto a standing stone of either color and flatten it. The capstone may be part of a larger stack that is making a longer move, but the final step (which flattens the wall) must be taken by the capstone alone.

*Aside from flattening it with a capstone, you cannot lay down a wall.*

## Movement Examples

**Moving One Piece:** You must drop at least one piece in each space as you go, so a single piece can move only one space. The black piece in this diagram can move to three of the four adjacent spaces, as indicated.

If it moves *up*, it moves into an empty space. If it moves *right*, it covers a white piece. If it moves *down*, it covers a black piece. It cannot move *left*, because that space is occupied by a standing stone.



Standing stones and capstones move by the same rules as flat stones. If this piece were a capstone, it would also have the option to move left, flattening the standing stone.

## Moving a Taller Stack:

White controls this stack, with a standing stone on top.

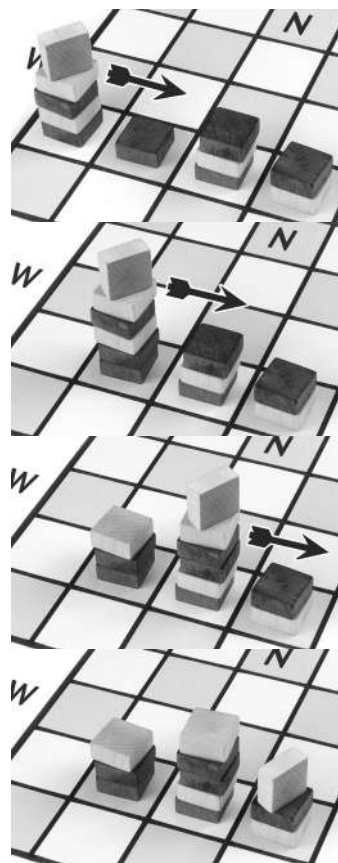
Assuming that this is a 5x5 board, the carry limit is *five*. That means White is allowed to move this entire stack of five pieces, or she could choose to leave some behind.

Moving in a straight line, White must drop *at least one piece in each space*. These pieces come off the bottom of the stack.

In the first space, she leaves two pieces. On the second space, she leaves two pieces again.

The standing stone, by itself, goes into the last space. The end result is shown in the last step.

This single move has given White control of three spaces that just belonged to Black!



## Scoring

Because there is a slight advantage for the player who goes first, you should keep score over multiple games.

Your score for winning is equal to the size of the board (for example, 25 points in a 5x5 game), plus the number of pieces that remain unplayed in your reserve. For example, in a 4x4 game, if you win the game with 4 unplayed pieces, you score 20 points. This is 16 points for the board, and 4 for the pieces.

For fairness, take turns going first. In the long run, you will score more points by winning more efficiently.

## Strategy

You can learn the basics of the game by playing a few quick games at 4x4. Because there are no capstones at this level, standing stones are more powerful and you'll use them for offense as well as defense.

Movement is the key to this game. Tall stacks have many options, and a single move can seriously change the balance of power.

But be careful not to make moves too early; you need to get pieces into play, and not just move the pieces you already have.

In the late game, don't be afraid to “run out the clock” and play out your pieces if you're ahead on the flats.

*Tak was created by **James Ernest** and **Patrick Rothfuss**. Playtesters included Boyan Radakovich, Paul Peterson, Rick Fish, Jeff Morrow, Jeff Wilcox, and Joe Kisenwether. **Tak: A Beautiful Game** is a trademark of Cheapass Games, LLC. Tak was made entirely in the USA.*

*Learn more about Tak at [jamesernest.com/games/tak](http://jamesernest.com/games/tak)*