Wunchunk

Wunchunk is an abstract strategy game for 2 to 4 players that is played on a "hexhex" board (a hexagonal shaped board made of hexagonal cells). Recommended playing sizes are boards with 5 to 8 cells per side.

Players take turns placing stones on a hexhex board, until the board is full or until all players pass consecutively. Groups of like-colored stones are "chunks" if they contain two or more stones; single stones are merely "crumbs." The winner is the player with the fewest CHUNKS in his/her color of stones at the end of the game.

In the case of a tie in the number of chunks, the tied player with the "fewest smallest groups" wins. That is, tied players compare their number of CRUMBS; the player with the fewest crumbs wins. If the number of crumbs is also tied, then players compare their number of groups consisting of exactly two stones; the player with the smallest number of size-2 groups wins -- and so on up through the various sizes (size-3, size-4, ...) until the tie is broken. (In the two player game, an "all the way up" tie is mathematically impossible so long as the players did not prematurely pass; eventually the tie will necessarily be broken as players compare larger and larger groups. In the multi-player game, an "all the way up" tie is theoretically possible but non-existent in practice.)

On his/her turn, a player is allotted a number of stones equal to his/her current number of chunks. (The initial board configuration begins -- Othello-like -- with each player having one chunk already on the board. See the "Starting Configuration" posting in the rules forum for details.) A player may play any number of stones from 0 (a pass) up to his/her allotted number. A player may play any color of stone (even an opponent's color); multiple stones can be any color or color mix.

In the two player game, in order to offset the first player advantage, the PIE rule applies: After Player 1 plays his/her very first stone, Player 2 then decides whether to play a stone to the board or switch colors with Player 1. (If "switch colors" is chosen, then the player who was formerly Player 1 is now Player 2, and immediately plays a stone as his/her turn #1 move.)

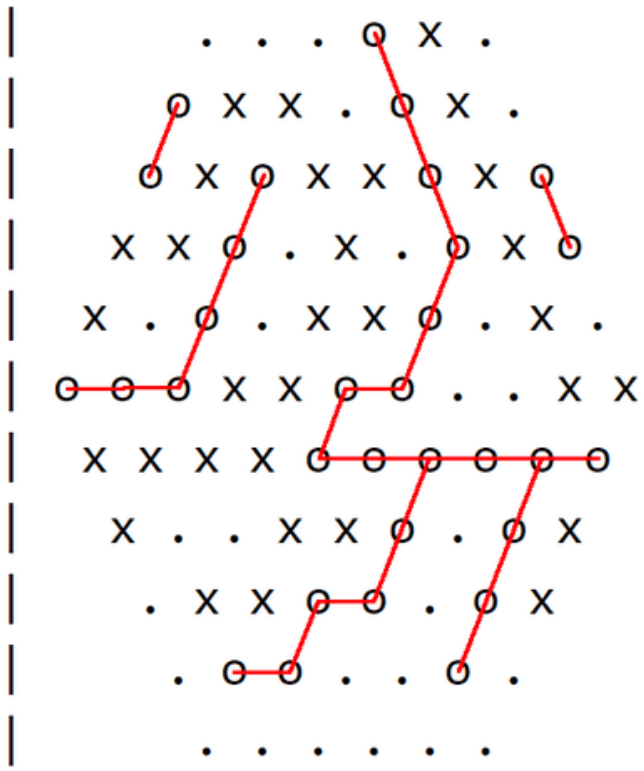
https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/2387288/wunchunk-example

Below is a Wunchunk endgame situation. It is the O-player's turn to play.

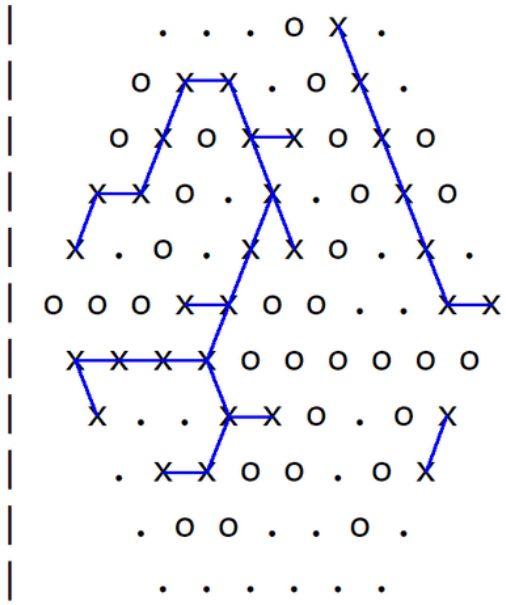
```
|       . . . o x .
|      o x x . o x .
|     o x o x x o x o
|    x x o . x . o x o
|   x . o . x x o . x .
| o o o x x o o . . x x
|   x x x x o o o o o o
|    x . . x x o . o x
|     . x x o o . o x
|      . o o . . o .
|       . . . . . .
```

```
Current Chunk Score:
"""""""""""""""""""""
X = 3
O = 4
```

To see the scores more clearly, here are the four O-chunks marked in red:



And here are the three X-chunks marked in blue:



Given the chunk score, the O-player gets budget of 4 stones to play to this board on his/her turn.

Below is how the O-player played (new stones in red). The O-player chose to play three O-stones and one X-stone as follows:

```
|       o o o o x .
|      o x x . o x .
|     o x o x x o x o
|    x x o . x . o x o
|   x . o . x x o . x .
|  o o o x x o o . . x x
|   x x x x o o o o o o
|    x x . x x o . o x
|     . x x o o . o x
|      . o o . . o .
|       . . . . . .
```

```
New Chunk Score:
""""""""""""""""""""
X = 3
O = 3
```

Comments:

In playing the stones as above, the O-player did two things:

(i) with the three O-stones, the O-player joined two O-chunks, thereby reducing his/her score from 4 to 3 (remember, low scores are good!);

(ii) with the single X-stone, the O-player blocked the last remaining area in which the X-player could create a new O-chunk, thereby guaranteeing that the O-chunk score will go no higher than 3.

This move secures the O-player the game, since he/she has several opportunities in the south to sabotage the X-player's score during his/her (i.e. the O-player's) next turn. For instance, the O-player will be able to use his/her budget of 3 stones to place two adjacent X-stones and then seal these off permanently with a strategically placed additional O-stone, thereby locking the X-player's score in at (at least) 4.

Of course, before this sabotage will take place, the X-player will have a turn and will have a budget of 3 stones to play. However, this budget of 3 stones is not enough to block ALL of the O-player's sabotage opportunities. So, the X-player is doomed to lose with smart play from the O-player.

Just a couple of side notes:

In real life play with stones and a physical board, the groups are easier to see than they are in the crude ASCII X-and-O version above!

Also, in real life games I like to create a makeshift scoretrack. The black player makes a line of stones equal to his current chunk-score in the margin of the game board on his side; the white player does the same on his (the white player's) side.

So for instance, if the score is Black 4, White 3, then the black player has a line of 4 black stones on the game board along a board-edge on his side, and the white player has a line of 3 white stones along a board-edge on his side. (In practice scores tend to stay under, say, 7 in my experience, so there is room on the board for the short score tracks that this convention involves.) As scores change, a player adds or subtracts a stone (or stones) to or from this makeshift score track accordingly.

[BGG description, Craig Duncan, 2019]