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Backgammon Glossary

by [Michael Strato](#)

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A

Ace: The number one on a die.

Ace Point: The one point; the lowest point in a player's home board.

Ace-Point Game: A late-game situation in which a player holds his opponent's one point (Ace Point) and is waiting for a chance to hit a blot his opponent might leave during the bearing in or bearing off stage of the game.

Accey-Deucey: A variant of backgammon that has been played by sailors in the U.S. Navy since the early 1900s.

Action Play: A move intended to provoke an exchange of hits.

Advanced Anchor: A point held on the opponent's four or five point.

Anchor: A point made in or near the opponent's home board, so called because it tends to stabilize the position.

Annotated Match: A recorded match that includes a commentary on the moves and cube decisions made.

Anti-Joker: A very bad roll; see **Joker**.

Attack: To hit an opponent's blot(s) in or near your own home board.

Attacking Game: A game plan based on hitting the opponent's blots in one's own home board in an effort to secure vital points while keeping an opponent's checkers on the Bar. See *Blitzing Game*.

Automatic Doubles: In a money-game in which the players have agreed to allow "Automatics", whenever the players roll the same number to start the game, the doubling cube is "automatically" turned from one to two, remaining in the center and available to either player.

Automatic: Same as *Automatic Double*.

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B

Backgame: A game plan based on holding two or more points in the opponent's home board, hoping to hit a winning shot late in the game.

Backgammon: In addition to being the name of the game, a *backgammon* win scores three times the current stakes in the games. If Player A bears off all his checkers and Player B still has one or more checkers either in Player A's home board or on the bar, Player A wins triple the value of the current game.

Baffle Box: A receptacle that sits at one side of the board and is used to randomize dice rolls. A player drops his dice into an opening on the top of the box and they tumble over angled baffles of wood, metal, or plastic inside the box to roll out onto the board from an opening at the bottom.

Bar: The raised strip which divides the backgammon board, used to hold checkers that have been hit and are waiting to re-enter.

Bar Point: A player's seven point, just next to the bar.

Bear In: To bring checkers into your home board.

Bear Off: The final stage of a game, in which you take checkers off the board.

Beaver: A rule used only in money-game play: A player who is accepting his opponent's double has the option to declare "Beaver" and turn the cube to the next higher level while maintaining control of the cube.

Big Play: A daring play made with the hope of gaining a more substantial improvement than would be expected from a safer play.

Blitz: A game plan based on hitting your opponent's blots repeatedly in your home board, in an all-out effort to keep him on the bar, make points, and close him out. Blitzes are usually attempted at the beginning of a game and can often lead to gammon or even backgammon wins.

Block: To restrict the movement of an opponent by making points in front of his checkers.

Blockade: To build several consecutive points in a row in an effort to form an impassable wall thus preventing your opponent's checkers from escaping.

Blocking Game: A game focused on building several consecutive points in a row that will obstruct your opponent's checkers from escaping.

Blot: A single checker alone on a point; blots are in danger of being hit and sent back to the Bar.

Blot-Hitting Contest: A prolonged exchange of hits as both players attempt to gain key points on the board.

Bold Play: A daring play, leaving one or more blots exposed to an attack — blots that are likely to be hit.

Bot: A backgammon-playing program—"bot" is an abbreviation of the word "robot".

Boxcars: A roll of 6-6.

Boxes: Short for Boxcars.

Break a point: To move one or both of two checkers off of a made point.

Break Contact: To move one's checkers past the opponent's, so that no further hitting is possible and the game becomes a pure race.

Broken Prime: A series of five or six blocking points having a gap in or near its middle.

Build a Board: To make points in your home board.

Builder: A checker in range of a vacant or slotted point.

Bury a Checker: To move a checker deep into your home board where it will no longer be of service in building points or hitting your opponent's blots. For example, if your 1 and 2 points are already made and you move an additional checker onto one of those points, you are said to "bury" the checker.

Button Up: To move a blot to a point where it will be safe.

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C

Calcutta Auction: An auction held just before the start of a backgammon tournament, in which players bid on players or groups of players, and the money offered is pooled together and paid out at the end of the tournament to those "owning" the winning players.

Candlesticks: Many checkers piled up on just a few points of the board.

Cash a Game: When a player doubles knowing the cube will be refused, he said to "cash" the game for its current value.

Centered Cube: The position of the cube before any players have doubled — it starts halfway across the board on the bar or in the middle of the tray on one side of the board showing the value of the initial stakes of the game.

Checker: One of the 30 pieces used as men in the game of backgammon.

Checker Play: A move of the checkers according to the numbers rolled on the dice.

Chouette: A backgammon variant in which a group of three or more players all play together on a single backgammon board. The two rivals in a chouette are The Box (one player) and The Team (the rest of the players).

Clear a Point: To move all checkers off a point.

Close a Point: To seal a point on the board by linking two checkers on it.

Close Out: A position in which a player has closed all of the points in his home board while his opponent still has one or more checkers on the Bar.

Cocked Dice: The dice are said to be "cocked" when the dice do not land flat on the board. If one or both of the dice come to rest leaning against the inner wall of the playing surface, against one of the checkers, or on top of a checker, the dice must be picked up and rolled again.

Coffeehouse: To talk or chatter in an attempt to affect your opponent's play.

Combination: The two numbers of a dice roll.

Combination Shot: A shot requiring both numbers of your roll to hit an opponent's checker.

Comeback Shot: Hitting an opponent's blot from the bar. Also called *Return Shot*.

Comfort Station: The midpoint on the board — your 13 point.

Communication: Keeping checkers within six pips of each other, where they can support each other.

Connected Position: A situation in which all your checkers are within a short distance of each other, thus making it easier to move your army forward as a group. A connected position gives you better possibilities of making points that block your opponent while creating safe landing points for your own blots.

Connectivity: Keeping your checkers close together so they defend each other as they move forward.

Consolidate: To reduce the number of open checkers (blots) you have.

Contact Position: A position in which the opponents have yet to move all their checkers past each other and hitting is still possible.

Contain a Checker: To prevent an opposing checker from escaping by blocking or hitting it.

Control of the Cube: When you are doubled and have accepted, you own or control the cube — only you can double next.

Count the Position: To calculate the number of spaces remaining for each player to bear all his checkers off the board — the totals of which are called the current *Pip Count*.

Coup Classique: A position that can arise when the player on roll has exactly three men left, all on his two-point, while the opponent has a single man on the ace point. The Coup arises when the player rolls a single ace, forcing him to expose two blots to being hit.

Cover: To play a second man onto a single checker, preventing the opponent from moving to the point or hitting the checkers.

CPW: The abbreviation for Cubeless Probability of Winning — the chance of winning a game without the use of the doubling cube.

Crawford Game: Used in match play: when the score reaches a point where one player is only one point away from winning the match, the following game is played without the use of the doubling cube. If the leader wins the game he wins the match but if the trailer wins, the cube may be used in all subsequent (post-Crawford) games of the match.

Crossover: The passing of a checker from one quadrant of the board to the next quadrant.

Crossover Count: To calculate how many crossovers you need to get all your checkers to your home board.

Cube: The doubling cube in backgammon, with its six sides marked with the numbers 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 and 64. The doubling cube is used to raise the stakes of the current game.

Cube Action: Any cube decision such as to double, to accept, or reject.

Cube Handling: The management of the doubling cube.

Cube Ownership: When a player has accepted a double he said to own the cube and only he can double next.

Cube Play: Any cube decisions such as to double, accept or reject.

Cup: A container used to shake and toss the dice.

Current Stake: The wager in the current game.

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D

Dance: When you fail to roll a number that re-enters you from the Bar. Also called *Fail*, *Fan* and *Flunk*.

Dead Cube: When the doubling cube reaches a value that will end the match in the current game. For example, in a match of five points with the score at 1-1, if one player doubles to two and the other doubles back to four, the game will end in the current game, the cube is dead, and there is no need to double to 8.

Dead Man: When you move a checker deep into your home board where it will no longer be of service in building points or hitting your opponent's blots, the checker is considered "dead". For example, if your one and two points are already made and you move an additional checker onto one of those points, you are said to "kill" the checker.

Dead Number: A single number which a player cannot legally play anywhere on the board.

Decline a Double: To refuse or reject an offer of the doubling cube, losing the prior value of the cube.

Deep Anchor: A point you own on your opponent's 1 or 2 point.

Deuce: A two on the dice.

Deuce Point: The two point.

Dice: The plural of die.

Dice Cup: A container used to shake and toss the dice.

Dice Mechanic: A player skilled at using underhanded methods to control the dice.

Die: A six-sided cube marked with 1 to 6.

Dilly Builder: A checker that bears on the lower points of your inner board.

Direct Hit: A shot at a checker less than seven spaces away, which could be hit using the number on one die.

Disengage: To end all contact between opposing checkers, so that hitting is no longer possible and the game becomes a simple race.

Distribution: The placement of your checkers in relation to each other and to the opposing men.

Diversification: See **Diversify**.

Diversify: To place your checkers so that most dice rolls can be played constructively.

DMP: The abbreviation for Double Match Point.

Double: 1) To offer the doubling cube; an offer to play on for twice the current value of the game. 2) A roll which produces the same number on both dice.

Double Ducks: The roll of double 2's. Some people say "quack, quack" when they get double deuces.

Double Game: A win of a *Gammon* — twice the stakes wagered in the current game.

Double Hit: To hit twice with the same dice roll.

Double Jeopardy: The danger that you will roll a bad number both on this turn and on subsequent turns.

Double Match Point: In match play, this refers to a game that will end a match, regardless of who wins.

Double Shot: The possibility of hitting two of your opponent's checkers on your next roll.

Doubler: Another name for *Doubling Cube*. Also, the player who is doubling.

Doubles: A roll showing the same number on both dice — when you roll doubles you play the number four times.

Doublet: Same as *Doubles*.

Doubling Block: Another name for the *Doubling Cube*.

Doubling Cube: The cube used in backgammon to double the stakes. A doubling cube has its six sides marked with the numbers 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 and 64.

Doubling on the Come: To double when you are expecting to get a very good roll.

Down: The movement of checkers from your 13 point onto your outerboard quadrant.

Drop: To pass or reject an offer of the doubling cube.

Dropper: An online player who purposely leaves a game he is losing to avoid having points deducted from his ranking on the server.

Ducks: A roll of 2-2.

Duplicate: To leave your opponent the same good number in all areas of the board. If you duplicate numbers, it will reduce the number of constructive rolls available to your opponent.

Duplication: Same as *Duplicate*.

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E

Edge of a Prime: The point that is open just before the point where a prime begins.

Elo Ratings System: A ratings system invented in 1960 by physics professor Arpad Elo for the U.S. Chess Federation. The Elo formula is also used by backgammon servers and tournament organizations to provide a ranking for their players.

End Game: The final stages of a game.

Enter: To come down from the Bar.

Equity: One's value in the current game, mathematically equivalent to the expected value.

Escape: To run checkers out of your opponent's home board to points of safety.

Exposed Checker: A lone checker or blot.

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F

Fail: When you do not roll a number that re-enters you from the Bar. Also called *Dance*, *Fan* and *Flunk*.

Fan: When you fail to roll a number that re-enters you from the Bar. Also called *Dance*, *Fail* and *Flunk*.

Flexibility: The ability to play future rolls in a way that will improve or maintain one's position.

Flunk: When you fail to roll a number that re-enters you from the Bar. Also called *Dance*, *Fail* and *Fan*.

Fly Shot: The same as **Indirect Shot**.

Forced Move: A mandatory move; the only legal play you have this turn.

Full Prime: An impassable blockade of six consecutive points in a row.

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G

Game Winning Chances: The chances of winning a game that will be played to its end without the use of the doubling club. Also called *GWC*.

Gammon: When a player wins a game in which his opponent has not borne off a single checker, the winning player scores twice the stakes wagered in the game. Compare with *Single Game* (single win) and a *Backgammon* (triple win).

Gammonish: A game or position that will likely be won as a *Gammon*.

Gap: Any unfilled spaces between the points you have made.

Gin Position: A position in which you are guaranteed to win the game.

Golden Point: The five point of either player's home board.

GWC: An abbreviation for Game Winning Chances.

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H

Hit: To hit a checker, sending it to the bar.

Hit and Pass: To hit an opponent's blot and then use the remaining part of roll to continue with your checker to a point of safety. Also called *Pick and Pass*.

Hit and Split: To move forward with one of your back runners, breaking an anchor, while hitting a blot elsewhere at the same time.

Hit Loose: To hit an opponent's checker in your home board while leaving your own checker as a blot in its place.

Hit-and-Cover: A roll whose numbers allow you to hit an opponent's blot with one part of the roll, and to cover a blot of your own at the same time with the other part of the roll.

Holding Game: A holding game occurs when one or both players move their back checkers to an advanced anchor in a home board or other forward anchors in the outfield, and play a waiting game to see who will leave be first to leave a shot. Usually the player who is behind in the race will try to set up a holding game.

Home: The inner board quadrant containing your 1 to 6 points.

Home Board: The quadrant to which you must enter all your checkers before beginning to bear them off the board. The home board quadrant contains your 1 to 6 points.

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I

Illegal Move or Illegal Play: An impossible play. In live play, this is when a player moves a checker using a number *other* than what is showing on the dice.

In the Air: To have one or more checkers on the Bar.

Indirect Hit: A hit that requires using both the numbers of a dice roll.

Indirect Shot: A possible hit that will require using both the numbers of a dice roll.

Inner Board: A player's home board.

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J

Jackpot: A single-elimination tournament in which numerous players pay an entry fee and compete for a bigger than normal payout. Usually a Jackpot tournament will see only a few winners. In a 4- or 8-player "mini-jackpot" there will likely be only one winner, while in a 128-player Super Jackpot, such as at the Monte Carlo World Championships, up to 8 players win cash.

Jacoby Rule: The Jacoby Rule is used in money games and states that if there has not been any cube action in the game then gammons and backgammons do not count; the game is scored as a single point.

Jellyfish: A commercial backgammon program (also called *Bot*) developed with neural-net technology, similar to Snowie and GNU Backgammon.

Joker: An extremely lucky roll.

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K

Kibitz: To be the spectator of a game.

Kibitzer: One who observes a game or match from the side — often one who makes comments about what is happening in the game.

Kill a Checker: When you move a checker deep into your home board where it will no longer be of service in building points or hitting your opponent's blots, the checker is considered "dead". For example, if your 1 and 2 points are already made and you move an additional checker onto one of those points, you are said to "kill" the checker.

Kill a Number: To purposely play a position in a way that will render unplayable a specific number on a forthcoming dice roll.

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L

Last Chance Flight: In some backgammon tournaments, players that lose in the Main Flight go to the Consolation Flights and if they lose in the Consolation get one final chance to win money by playing in the Last Chance Flight, against the other players that lost in the Consolation.

Last Roll Position: A position in which the next roll will decide the outcome of the game.

Leave a Shot: To expose a checker to being hit.

Lift: To pick up a checker and move it to a point of safety.

Lipped Cup: A dice cup with ridges in its interior designed to jiggle the dice as they roll out of the cup.

Loaded Dice: Dice whose numbers have been altered or that conceal hidden weights and are used to cheat in backgammon and other games.

Loose Checker: A checker that is exposed to being hit. Also called a *Blot* or *Loose Man*.

Loose Hit or Loose Play: To hit an opponent's checker in your home board and leave your own blot in its place, thus risking a return shot.

Lose One's Market: To miss an opportunity to double a position that is a take on this turn but not on your next one because your position will have improved so much that it will be a pass. Therefore you miss, or lose, the opportunity to have won double the current stakes. See *Market Loser*.

Lover's Leap: To play a roll of 6-5 from your 24 point to your 13 point.

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M

Made Point: A point you own; made by joining two checkers on the same pip.

Major Split: Moving one your back checkers up from the 24 point anchor to a point three or more pips away, such as the 20 or 21 point.

Make a Point: To join two checkers together on the same point.

Make One's board: To close all the points in your home board.

Man: One of your checkers.

Mandatory Double: A double which will increase your chance of winning a match with no additional risk, and which therefore you should offer at your earliest opportunity. For example, if you just won the post-Crawford game in a 5 point match, and the score is 4-3 in favor of your opponent, you should double to 2 at the very first possible opportunity in the next game.

Market Loser: A sequence of rolls that improves your position to such an extent that your opponent can no longer take a double.

Match: To play a series of backgammon games up to a pre-assigned number of points. The first player to reach the number of specified points is declared the winner of the match.

Match Equity: One's chance of winning the match at the current score, usually expressed as a percentage.

Match Equity Table: A table that shows one's chances of winning a match based on how many points each player still needs to win the match (the current score).

Match Play: A form of playing backgammon – to play a series of backgammon games up to a pre-assigned number of points. The player first to reach the number of specified points is declared the winner of the match.

Match Winning Chances: A player's chances (probability) of winning a match — often referred to as MWC.

Men: The 30 pieces used to play backgammon.

Mid-Point: The 13 point of your board.

Money Game Play: A form of playing backgammon — to play one or more games for a pre-specified wager per game.

Move Up: To move forward in your opponent's home board.

Mutual Holding Game: When both players move their back checkers to an advanced anchor in a home board, or other forward anchors in the outfield, and are playing a waiting game to see who will leave a blot that might be hit. A typical mutual holding game scenario is when both players own their 18, 13 and 8 points.

MWC: The abbreviation for Match Winning Chances.

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N

Neural Network: A software structure that seeks to mimic the way the human brain operates, by utilizing an interconnected network of neurons to recognize and evaluate patterns.

No Contact: When the players have moved all their checkers past each other and no further hitting is possible.

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O

On the Bar: When your checker is hit and is waiting to re-enter, you are said to be "on the bar".

On Roll: The player whose turn it is roll now is said to be "on roll".

Open Point: A point on the board that is not owned by either player.

Outer Board: The quadrant on the board from the 7 to 12 points.

Outer Men: The three checkers that start the 8 point at the beginning of a game.

Outfield: The outer boards.

Over the Board: Playing a game live, in person, as opposed to playing on the Internet or analyzing positions at leisure.

Own a Point: When you have two or more checkers on a point, you are said to "own" the point.

Own the Cube: When you have accepted an offer of the doubling cube you possess or "own" control of the cube.

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P

Partial Prime: A blockade of less than six points — compare with *Full Prime*.

Pass: To reject an offer of the doubling cube, thus losing the prior value of the cube.

Perfecta: The best possible roll at the moment.

Pick and Pass: To hit an opponent's blot and then use the remaining part of roll to continue with your checker to a point of safety. Same as *Hit and Pass*.

Pip: 1) Any of the 24 points or triangles on a backgammon board. 2) One of the number spots on the dice.

Pip Count: The number of spaces remaining for each player to bear all his checkers off the board — the totals of which are called the current *Pip Count*.

Playing Safe: To prevent your checkers from being hit by moving them to points of safety.

Point: One of the 24 triangles of the backgammon board — also called *Pip*.

Point on a Blot: To hit an opponent's blot with two of your checkers while making the point at the same time.

Possession of the Cube: When you have accepted an offer of the doubling cube you own or possess control of the cube. Same as *Own the Cube*.

Post-Crawford: Any games after the *Crawford* game.

Precision dice: Dice that have been carefully manufactured to have equal weight on all six sides. Precision dice are usually translucent and have rounded edges, and the pips on the faces of the dice are flat instead of dimpled.

Premature Roll: To roll your dice before your opponent has finished making his move. In live play the rule is you cannot toss your dice until your opponent has finished his turn by picking up his dice.

Prime: A number of consecutive points, usually four, five or six in a row, that are made with the intention of blocking an opponent from escape. The best prime is when you hold six consecutive points, called *Full Prime*.

Prime versus Prime: A situation in which both players have built a blockade of five or six points in a row in front of one or more of the opponent's checkers; the players strive to maintain the better prime and prevent each other's runners from escaping for as long as possible.

Primed: Blocked in by a prime.

Priming Game: A game who's main objective is to block an opponent's checkers behind a prime.

Prop or Proposition: A backgammon position whose possible outcome two players disagree on, and which they decide to play out against each other a pre-defined number of games, usually for money.

Pure, Pure Play: To distribute your checkers to points that will give you more possible numbers to fill in gaps in your prime on forthcoming rolls.

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Q

Quacks: A roll of 2-2. Also called *Double Ducks*.

Quadrant: One of the four sections of a backgammon board.

Quads: A roll of 4-4.

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R

Raccoon: To immediately redouble an opponent who has Beavered.

Race: The essence of the game of Backgammon – to be the first to run your checkers around the board and bear them off.

Rail: Another name for the Bar.

Recirculate: To deliberately leave blots you want your opponent to hit so that they are sent to the Bar and back around the board. This timing tactic is used to maintain a prime or to avoid a broken backgame.

Recube: To redouble.

Re-Enter: To come down from the bar and into your opponent's home board after you have been hit.

Refuse: To reject an offer of the doubling cube. Also called *Drop or Pass*.

Resign: To surrender the game to your opponent and lose the value of the current wager or stakes.

Response: The second dice roll of a game.

Return Shot: Any possible hits that can be made by an opponent who has just been hit.

Roll: A toss or throw of the dice.

Roll a Prime Forward: To move forward a *Prime* while maintaining its structure, done by using your spare checkers to build new points at the front of the prime.

Rollout: To analyze a position by playing it out many times, either manually or with a computer program.

Roof: Another name for the Bar.

Run: To move your back checkers out of your opponent's home board in an attempt to escape.

Running Game: A game in which no further hitting is possible.

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S

Safety a Checker: To move a blot to a point where it cannot be hit.

Sandbag: 1) To register to play in a tournament division that is much lower than one's true skill level. 2) To deliberately lose matches for the purpose of lowering one's rating.

Send Back: To hit a checker, sending it to the Bar.

Settlement: An agreement to end the current game in exchange for a specified number of points.

Shift, Shift Points: To switch your checkers from a point you have already made to a more advanced point.

Shot: A chance at hitting an opponent's checker.

Single Game: To win the present game for its current value as opposed to winning it as a gammon (twice the value) or a backgammon (triple the value).

Single Shot: A blot that can only be hit with a single specific checker.

Slot: To place a lone checker on a point you expect to make on a forthcoming roll.

Slot and Split: To move a blot to a point you expect to make in your home board while simultaneously moving forward one of your back checkers.

Snake Eyes: A roll of 1-1.

Solid Prime: Five or six points made in a row with no gaps in between.

Spare: When you have more than two checkers on a point, the additional checkers are called spares.

Speed Board: A position in which all of your checkers are on low points (i.e. on your 1, 2 and 3 points), enabling you to bear off two or more men with every roll.

Split: To use half of your roll to break a low anchor and move one of your back checkers forward— example, to play a 6 from your 24 to your 18 point.

Stack: To pile up more than three checkers on a point.

Steam, Steamer: To "steam" is go on tilt. A steamer is a player who is losing and playing recklessly in an attempt to recoup his losses.

Straggler: A checker that has been left behind — usually the rearmost blot you have — and one that needs to escape to safety or reach your home board.

Straight Race: A position in which the players have moved all their checkers past each other and no further hitting is possible.

Strip a Point: To move your last spare checker off a point, leaving it with only two checkers.

Strong Board: To have several points built in your home board thus making it more difficult for an opponent to re-enter a checker that is hit.

Switch Points: To move a made point forward. Example: with a roll of 1-1, to hit a blot on your 4 point with two checkers from your 5 point.

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T

Take: To accept an offer of the doubling cube and play on for twice the current stakes.

TD: Short for "Tournament Director".

Throw: To roll the dice.

Timing: The ability to maintain a specific strategic structure.

Too Good to Double: A position in which there is a high probability of scoring a gammon and winning twice the stakes — whereas if you double now, your opponent will simply drop and you win only the current wager.

Triple Game: A win of three times the stakes in a game, also called a *Backgammon*.

Turn the Cube: To offer the doubling cube.

Turn the Corner: To move a checker from an opponent's outer board past the mid-point and into your own outer board.

Two on the Roof: When two checkers have been hit and are sitting on the Bar.

Two-Down: To play two checkers from your 13 point into your outer board.

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U

Under the Gun: To have a blot high in your opponent's home board that is in danger of being hit by more than two of your opponent's checkers.

Undoubled Gammon: To win a gammon in a game that has not seen any cube action.

Unstack: To play checkers off of points that have four or more checkers.

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V

Volatility: The calculation of how much the equity of the current position is likely to change on forthcoming rolls.

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X

X-22: The nickname of Paul Magriel, a backgammon champion and author of the famous book "Backgammon", first published in 1976.

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