

✧ Network ✧

By Sid Sackson

"For quite a long time I have been fascinated with the idea of arranging checkers on a board so that they form a chain, connected to each other along a straight line, but with intervening empty spaces. It provided an interesting way of doodling, but wouldn't coalesce into a game until one simple idea presented itself to me. That was the idea of limiting friendly pieces in a group to a maximum of 2 (which of course, won't mean much to you until you read the rules).

With this concept, the game of Network fell into place in a matter of minutes. It is a game of pure strategy, but it is a fast game. It usually averages about ten moves by each contestant, which allows for the playing of a good number of games in a session."

- Sid Sackson "A Gamut of Games"

EQUIPMENT:

Network is played on an 8x8 checkerboard. The players are named "Dark" and "Light". Each player has 10 checkers of their color. The two players have goal zones which are marked with dots of their respective color.



Figure 1 – The board and pieces

OBJECT:

The object of the game is for each player to complete a “network” that joins their two goal zones. The network must originate at one goal zone and terminate at the other and must contain at least 6 pieces which are “connected” to each other along straight lines which may be orthogonal or diagonal. Two friendly pieces are connected if they are either directly adjacent or separated only by empty spaces along a row, column, or diagonal.

NETWORKS:

The following diagrams show two possible winning networks that Dark could complete from the 9 pieces placed on the board (enemy pieces not shown here).

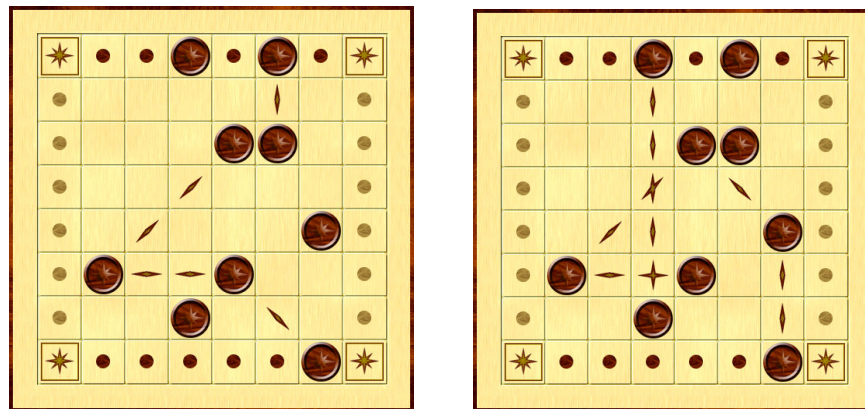


Figure 2 – Winning networks

An enemy piece placed in the straight line between two pieces breaks the connection. Although more than one piece may be placed in a goal zone, only a single piece in each goal zone can be included as part of the winning network. For that reason, neither of the following is considered a complete network.

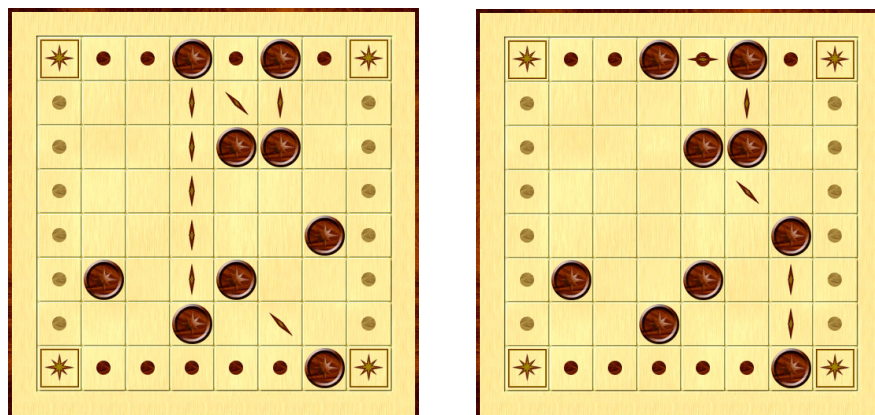


Figure 3 – Incomplete networks

A network may not pass through the same piece twice, even if it is only counted once. For that reason, the following network is not valid.

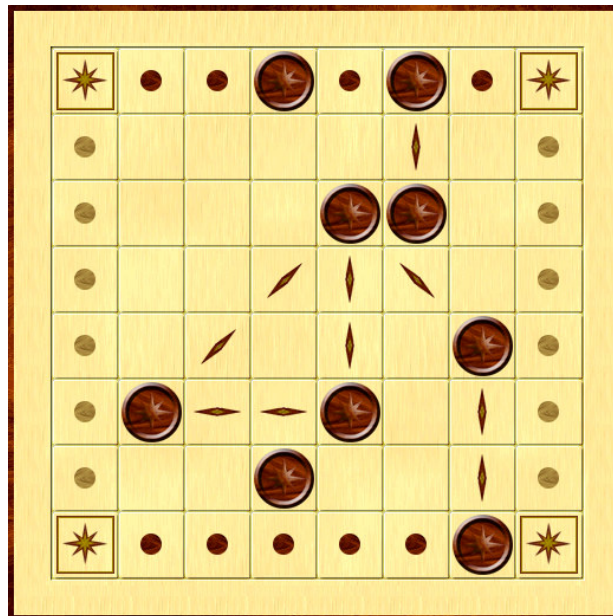


Figure 4 – Invalid network

In addition, a network may not pass through a player's own color without turning. Therefore, the following network is not allowed.

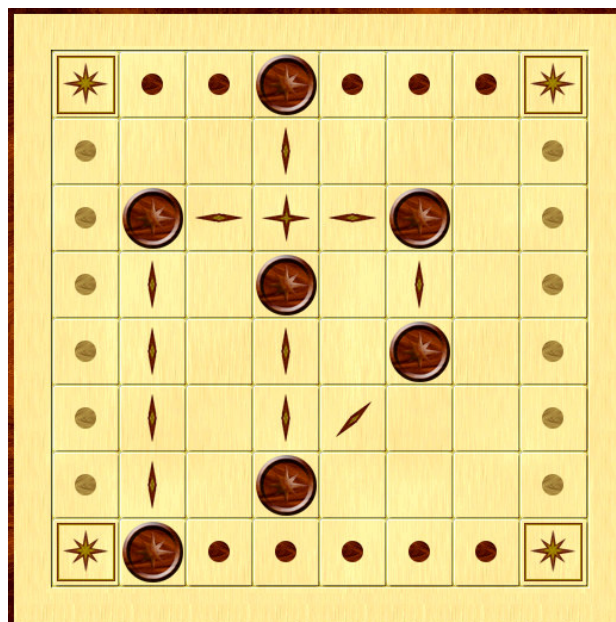


Figure 5 – Invalid network

Game Play:

Each player alternately places a single piece on a vacant square. A player may not have more than two pieces in an adjoining group, whether connected orthogonally or diagonally. In the following diagram, the grey bubbles indicate legal placements for the Dark player.

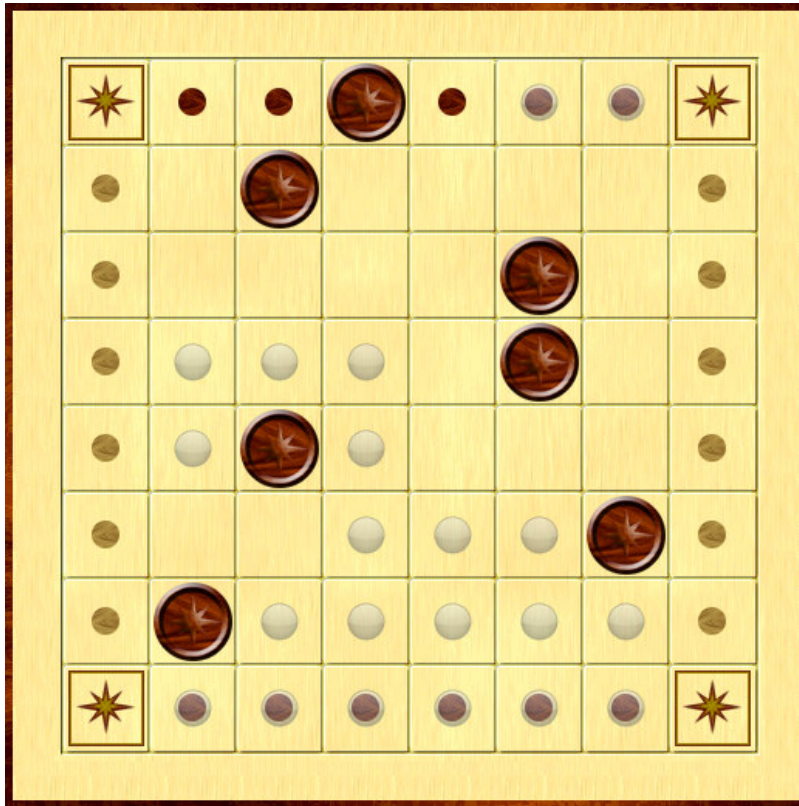


Figure 6 – Legal moves for Dark

If all the pieces are placed before a winning network is formed, then each player in turn moves any one of their pieces to any vacant square (subject to previous restrictions), until a winning network is formed. The game ends in a draw if a position occurs three times with the same player to move.

A player may not make a move which will result in *both* players completing a network. This could occur when moving a piece which is blocking an opponent's winning network.

At the conclusion of the game, the computer automatically places markers to display the winning path.

The "equalized" variant attempts to compensate for the first player's advantage by changing the turn order to Dark-Light-Light, then repeating Dark-Light.