



# AMERICAN REGULATION BACKGAMMON



Honest, Fair Play And Sportsmanship Will Take Precedence Over Any Rule - Directors Discretion  
2021 EDITION\*, Effective September 01, 2021

## UNTIMED PLAY

### 1.0 PROPRIETIES

1.1 TERMS. TD-Tournament Director, TS-Tournament Staff

1.2 SCOPE AND INTERPRETATION. These Tournament Rules and Procedures cannot regulate all possible situations that may arise during tournament play. Therefore, the TD(s) and the TS shall have complete and sole authority to find solutions dictated by fairness and sportsmanship to any given circumstance that may arise. Except where otherwise specified, the commonly accepted Rules of Backgammon apply (See page 4 "Basic Rules of Backgammon"). The rights of the TD(s) to alter or amend any particular rule shall be reserved.

1.3 ENTRY. All player entries are subject to the approval of the TD(s). Reasons for exclusion need not be stated. Where more than one Tournament division exists, an entrant may be restricted from playing in a lower division than their ability.

1.4 AIDS. Once a match is in progress, players shall not use written, mechanical, or electronic aids except to keep score and/or time in a clocked or timed match.

1.5 COMMUNICATIONS. The official Tournament language is English. Speech in any other language will not be permitted between players and/or spectators while matches are in progress with the exception of Doubles Partners. Mobile phones or any other electronic communication devices may not be used in a designated tournament area.

1.6 SPECTATORS. Spectators shall remain silent while observing a match and have no right to comment or draw attention to any aspect of a match. Spectators who observe improprieties or irregularities during a match should discuss them in private with the TS. Any player may request that one or more spectators be barred from viewing their match. Violators may be sanctioned at the TD(s) sole discretion.

### 2.0 REGULATIONS

2.1 PLACE. Matches shall only be played in designated Tournament areas or as authorized by the TD(s).

2.2 TIME & BREAKS. All matches shall start promptly at the appointed times. Unscheduled matches shall have a designated start time of 10 minutes after both preceding matches have been completed, unless a later start time is posted. Each player may take a 5-minute break after each hour of play time.

2.3 PENALTY POINTS. Unless excused by the TD, a late player shall be penalized with points being awarded to the opponent. The first penalty point shall be awarded 10 minutes after the appointed starting time and accrue thereafter at 1 point for each 5 minute delay. When the penalty points awarded exceed half the number needed to win the match, the absent player loses by forfeit. To avoid penalties, a player shall obtain the TD(s) consent when leaving the Tournament site for more than 10

minutes.

2.4 SLOW PLAY. Players are expected to play at a reasonable pace. The TD may impose a clock on any match that is determined to be delaying the tournament schedule.

2.5 MONITORS. A referee may be appointed to a match at a player's request or at TD(s) discretion.

### 3.0 PRELIMINARIES

3.1 EQUIPMENT. Pursuant to TD approval, acceptable tournament equipment consists of:

- (a) Standard Backgammon Board With 30 Checkers
- (b) 1 Pair of shared Dice (preferably precision)
- (c) 1 Doubling Cube
- (d) 2 Dice Cup(s) (preferably lipped)
- (e) Means To Keep Score (paper/pen, Score Board, etc.)
- (f) Game Clock
- (g) Baffle Box or Dice Tower

3.2 Prior to the commencement of a match, players must agree on equipment, direction of play, checker color and seat location in accordance with TD requirements and/or approval. Any disagreement may be decided by rolling the dice.

3.3 EQUIPMENT CHANGES. The TD may replace equipment at any time. Otherwise, the equipment initially selected shall be used throughout a match. Either player may require a mixing of the dice prior to the start of any game. To mix the dice the demanding player shakes multiple dice together in one cup and rolls them out. The opponent selects a die, then the roller.

### 4.0 GAME PLAY/IRREGULARITIES

4.1 RANDOM ROLLS. Dice are strictly a means of obtaining random numbers; any other use violates the rules and the spirit of Tournament Backgammon. A legal roll consists of shaking the dice vigorously in a dice cup and then simultaneously tossing them onto the playing surface or into a Baffle Box or Dice Tower, allowing them to bounce and roll freely. When using a Baffle Box or Dice Tower, dice may be tossed in with either a cup or by hand. Between turns, the dice shall remain in plain view on the playing surface.

4.2 VALID ROLLS. Valid rolls consist of the dice being shaken vigorously in a cup and must roll freely out of the cup, at or about the same time, to the roller's right side of the bar and onto the playing surface of the board. The dice shall not touch the roller's hand and the cup shall not touch the board when dice are thrown. The dice must come to rest with each die lying flat on the playing surface. A die has "come to rest" once it has stopped moving for at least two (2) seconds. If any of the foregoing does not occur, the roll is invalid and the dice must be rerolled. In the event of a dispute, a player who rerolls prior to receiving acknowledgment from the opponent that the dice are "cocked" will be at a disadvantage. Rolling to the left is only permitted with opponent's permission or the use of a Baffle Box or Dice Tower.

4.3 MOVING. A player shall move the checkers in an unambiguous manner, using only one hand. Checkers must be reentered from the bar before moving any other checker.

4.4 CHECKER HANDLING. A player shall not touch any checkers or dice during an opponent's turn. Checkers that have been "hit" must be kept on the bar pending reentry. Checkers that have been borne off must be kept off the entire playing surface for the rest of the game. A player with a checker illegally removed from play may still be Gammoned or Backgammoned.

- (a) CHECKER SHUFFLING -- During a player's turn, checkers may be "shuffled" back and forth in order to test possible plays. In doing so, the player shall place the checker(s) being moved near the top of a point or a discernable distance above checkers that are already on the intended point. If a contemplated move involves hitting an opponent's checker, the player shall place the checker on top of the potentially hit checker(s) without placing any checker(s) on the bar. Possible plays should be examined slowly and in a manner that is clear to understand by the opponent. If a player wishes to look at more than one alternative play, all checkers shall be returned to their original position before each test is considered.

4.5 TURN. A player concludes a turn by tapping the board or bar, hitting a timeless clock or picking up their dice if playing with 2 separate pairs.

4.6 PREMATURE ACTION. The opponent of a player who rolls prematurely shall complete their turn and then either let the premature roll stand or require a reroll. The opponent of a player who Doubles prematurely shall complete their turn and then pass or take.

4.7 ERROR IN SETUP. An incorrect starting position must be corrected prior to the fifth roll of the game. Thereafter the existing setup becomes official. Players starting with less than 15 checkers in play may still be Gammoned or Backgammoned.

4.8 LEGAL PLAYS. All plays must be legal in accordance with the Rules of Backgammon (See page 4 "Basic Rules of Backgammon") and these Tournament Regulations. Players are obligated to immediately announce an illegal play. Illegal plays must be corrected before the subsequent turn begins (a valid dice roll or an offered Cube). Otherwise, the illegal play will stand. To correct an illegal play, the game returns to the position before the illegal play, the roll is played legally and the game continues from that point forward. Continued offenses will result in a warning followed by disqualification.

4.9 COMPLETION. Each game must be rolled to completion unless ended by passing an offered Cube or conceding a "Gin" position. No individual game or match may be canceled, replayed, or settled. Players are responsible for playing to the posted match length.

4.10 REPORTING RESULTS. The winner shall report the match result to TS. The TS shall verify and post the result. The TD may correct a wrongly posted result.

4.11 EQUIPMENT FAILURE/MISUSE. In the event there is an equipment failure (i.e. baffle box breaks or falls, cup breaks or is dropped, clock malfunctions, etc.) the game is paused, the issue is resolved and the game is continued from the last completed roll or move

## 5.0 SCORING/DOUBLING

5.1 KEEPING SCORE. Each player shall keep a running match score and compare it to the opponent's score at the start of every game. In the event of a scoring dispute, a player not keeping a written log of the score will be at a disadvantage.

5.2 CUBE SETUP. Both players shall take care that each game with a Cube in play begins with the Cube centered and off to the side showing 1, 64 or other non-numerical image. Should a dispute arise, the current position and level of the Cube may influence TD(s) ruling.

5.3 CUBE RULES. Gammons and Backgammons count at all times regardless of Cube position or level.

5.4 CUBE HANDLING. A player may double when on turn, prior to a valid dice roll but not after rolling cocked dice. To double or redouble, a player places the Cube on the playing surface and moves the Cube toward the opponent with the next higher value face up while saying "double" and ending their turn pursuant to Rule 4.5. To accept, the opponent says "take" while placing the Cube on their side of the board in plain view showing the new value. To reject the double, the opponent says "Pass", records the score, and the board is then reset for the next game.

5.5 CRAWFORD RULE. When either player reaches one point away from victory, the next game is called "The Crawford Game" and shall be played to conclusion with a Cube value of 1. The Cube shall be removed from the board and is out of play. The Cube will be in play for all "Post Crawford" games.

5.6 DEAD CUBE. When the Cube level is high enough to ensure the match will end with the current game, that game shall be played to conclusion at the present Cube level.

## 6.0 CONTENTIONS

6.1 DISPUTES. When a dispute arises, all players must leave Dice, Checkers, Cube and Score unchanged while the TD is summoned. Violations in this area are most serious and create a presumption in favor of the opponent.

6.2 TESTIMONY. Any player may argue issues of fact or rule. Spectators shall only testify at the TD's request.

6.3 APPEALS. A player may appeal a TD's ruling but must do so before play resumes. To resolve an appeal, the TD shall convene a Ruling Committee of three or more knowledgeable and disinterested Backgammon players. The Ruling Committee shall hear relevant testimony and arguments and may only overturn the TD's ruling by unanimous decision. A Ruling Committee's decision is final.

# TIMED PLAY

Pursuant to Untimed Play Rules

## 7.0 CLOCK USAGE

7.1 A Game Clock may be used according to tournament format. Clock use classifications are:

- CLOCKS REQUIRED - must be used
- CLOCKS PREFERRED - a player(s) request
- CLOCKS OPTIONAL - both players consent

Clocks may be introduced to a game at any time. The clock selected must use a Simple Delay system consisting of a Reserve time for the match and a per-move Delay time. All clocks must be approved by the TD.

## 8.0 TIME LIMITS

8.1 TD DISCRETION. Unless the TD announces and posts alternate clock settings, the following shall apply:

- (a) SINGLES MATCHES. Reserve time is based on match length. Reserve time for each player is set at two (2) minutes per match point, less one (1) minute per point already scored by either player. The per move delay is 12 seconds for each player. Both players shall confirm proper settings prior to use.
- (b) DOUBLES MATCHES. Reserve time for each team is set at two and one-half (2:30) minutes per match point, less one and one-quarter (1:15) minutes per point already scored by either team. The per move delay is 15 seconds for each team. Both teams shall confirm the proper setting prior to use.

## 9.0 THE PLAY

9.1 EQUIPMENT. Two dice cups (one for each player or team) and one pair of shared dice.

9.2 DICE MIX. See Rule 3.2

9.3 OPENING ROLL. To begin the game, each player rolls one die. The player rolling the lower die starts the opponent's clock. The player with the higher die makes the opening move.

9.4 COMPLETING A TURN. A player completes a turn by "hitting" the clock (starting your opponents clock) with the same hand used for moving checkers and leaves the dice in place on the board. While playing against an opponent with no legal move(s) (i.e. closed out on the bar) that player must still hit the clock to end their turn, reset the delay and give the opponent the opportunity to double or redouble and verify all moves were legal. A player with no legal moves is not required to roll the dice but must continue hitting the clock to complete a turn and reset the delay.

9.5 DOUBLING. After doubling or redoubling, a player hits the clock. To reject a double, the opponent says "Pass" and stops both clocks, records the score and resets the board. To accept the double, the opponent says "Take", places the Cube on their side of the board and hits the clock.

## 10.0 IRREGULARITIES

10.1 MISHANDLING DICE. A player shall not touch or pick up the dice until the opponent hits the clock to complete a turn. A player who prematurely picks up the dice shall forfeit the move

delay on the next turn. The player on turn stops both clocks to claim the time penalty. The penalized player must wait until the delay has counted down to zero before picking up and rolling the dice. A witness is recommended.

10.2 DICE NOT LEFT ON THE BOARD. When a player hits the clock to end a turn and also picks up the dice, the opponent may stop the clock and complete a turn with the clock stopped.

10.3 ILLEGAL PLAYS. Pursuant to Rule 4.8 When a player has made an illegal play, attention must be brought to the irregularity. The offended player hits the clock and the offending player makes a legal checker play and then hits the clock. If the illegal play goes unnoticed, the play will stand when the offending player completes their next turn pursuant to Rule 4.5.

## 11.0 ENDING A GAME OR MATCH

11.1 CONCEDED OR ENDING A GAME. Prior to rolling the dice a player may concede a single game, Gammon or Backgammon "Gin Position" by stopping the clock and stating the offer. To accept the offer, the opponent says "Accept", records the score and resets the board. To reject the offer the opponent says "Reject" and restarts the clock. After bearing off the last checker, a player stops the clock and resets the board.

11.2 STOPPING THE CLOCK. A player may stop the clock to:

- (a) offer a concession.
- (b) take an authorized break.
- (c) retrieve fallen dice.
- (d) contest an opponent's action(s).
- (e) complete a turn after the opponent has picked up the dice in error.
- (f) summon the TD.

11.3 TIME EXPIRATION. A player who runs out of reserve time loses the match unless there is a "Gin Position" whereby that player cannot lose.

## RULE SET OPTIONS\*\*\*

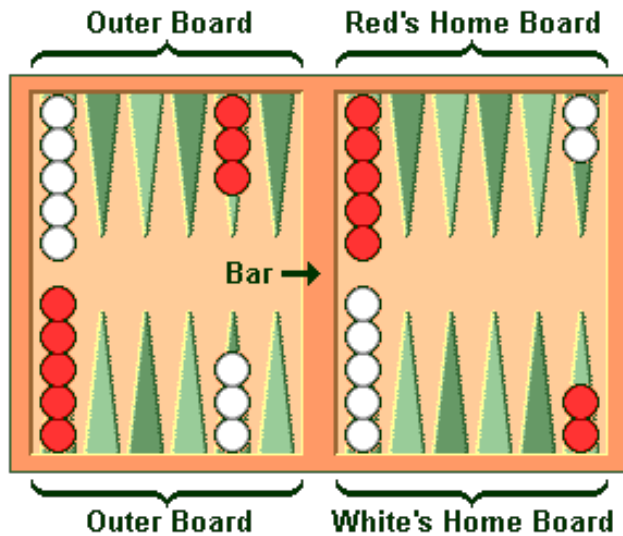
THESE OPTIONS MAY ONLY BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE DIRECTOR AND ONLY IF ALL PLAYERS ARE MADE AWARE OF THESE CHANGES PRIOR TO TOURNAMENT COMMENCEMENT.

- ⇒ **3.3a (a) EQUIPMENT CHANGES.** If each player will have two of their own dice, then players shall take turns selecting die, one at a time.
- ⇒ **4.8a ILLEGAL PLAYS.** A player may condone their opponent's illegal play by rolling the dice or turning the cube. Otherwise, the player must require the opponent to replay the entire roll legally.

## BASIC RULES OF BACKGAMMON\*\*

### Setup

Backgammon is a game for two players, played on a board consisting of twenty-four narrow triangles called points or pips. The triangles alternate in color and are grouped into four quadrants of six triangles each. The quadrants are referred to as a player's home board and outer board. The home and outer boards are separated from each other by "the bar".



**Figure 1.** A board with the checkers in their initial position. An alternate arrangement is the reverse of the one shown here, with the home board on the left and the outer board on the right. Simply turn the board around.

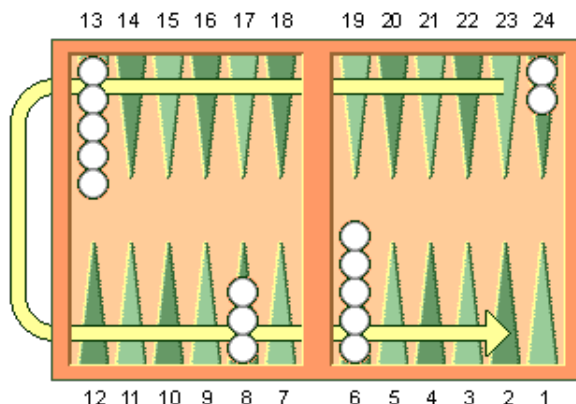
The points are numbered for either player starting in that player's home board. The outermost point is the twenty-four point, which is also the opponent's one point. Each player has fifteen checkers of their own color. The initial arrangement of checkers is: two on each player's twenty-four point, five on each player's thirteen point, three on each player's eight point, and five on each player's six point.

Both players have their own pair of dice and a dice cup used for shaking. A doubling Cube, with the numerals 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, and 64 on its faces is used to keep track of the current stake of the game.



### Object of the Game

The object of the game is move all your checkers into your own home board and then bear them off. The first player to bear off all of their checkers wins the game.



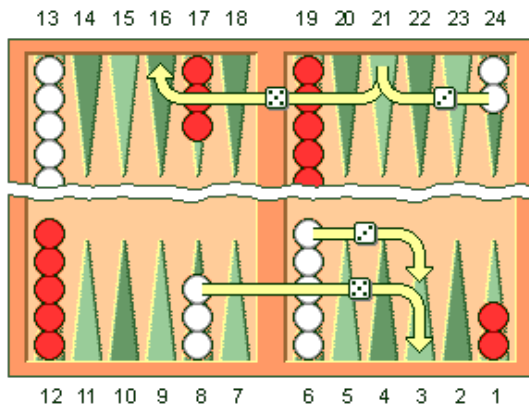
**Figure 2.** Direction of movement of White's checkers. Red's checkers move in the opposite direction.

## Movement of the Checkers

To start the game, each player throws a single die. This determines both the player to go first and the numbers to be played. If equal numbers come up, then both players roll again until they roll different numbers. The player throwing the higher number now moves their checkers according to the numbers showing on both dice. After the initial roll, the players throw two dice and alternate turns.

The roll of the dice indicates how many points, or pips, the player is to move their checkers. The checkers are always moved forward to a lower-numbered point. The following rules apply:

1. A checker may be moved only to an open point or one that is not occupied by two or more opposing checkers.
2. The numbers on the two dice constitute separate moves. For example, if a player rolls 5 and 3, they may move one checker five spaces to an open point and another checker three spaces to an open point, or they may move the one checker a total of eight spaces to an open point, but only if the intermediate point (either three or five space from the starting point) is also open.



**Figure 3.** Two ways that White can play a roll of 5-3.

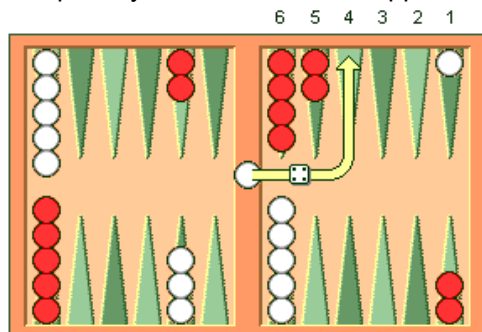
3. A player who rolls doubles plays the numbers shown on the dice twice. A roll of 6 and 6 means that the player has four sixes to use, and they may move any combination of checkers they feel appropriate to complete this requirement.
4. A player must use both numbers of a roll (or all four numbers of a double) if it is legally possible. When only one number can be played, the player must play that number. Or if either number can be played but not both, the player must play the larger number. When neither number can be used, the player loses their turn. In the case of doubles, when all four numbers cannot be played, the player must play as many numbers as possible.

## Hitting and Entering

A point occupied by a single checker of either color is called a blot. If an opposing checker lands on a blot, the blot is hit and placed on the bar.

Any time a player has one or more checkers on the bar, their first obligation is to enter those checker(s) into the opposing home board. A checker is entered by moving it to an open point corresponding to the numbers on the rolled dice.

For example, if a player rolls 4 and 6, they may enter a checker onto either the opponent's four point or six point, so long as the prospective point is not occupied by two or more of the opponent's checkers.



**Figure 4.** If White rolls with a checker on the bar, they must enter the checker onto Red's four point since Red's six point is not open.

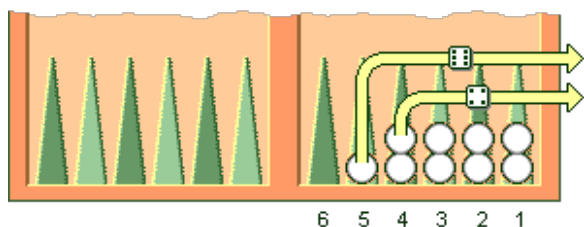
If neither of the points are open, the player loses their turn. If a player is able to enter some but not all of their checkers, they must enter as many as possible and then forfeit the remainder.

After the last of a player's checkers has been entered, any unused numbers on the dice must be played by moving either the checker that was entered or a different checker.

## Bearing Off

Once a player has moved all of their fifteen checkers into their home board, they may commence bearing off. A player bears off a checker by rolling a number that corresponds to the point on which the checker resides and then removes that checker from the board. Thus, rolling a 6 permits the player to remove a checker from the six point.

If there is no checker on the point indicated by the dice, the player must make a legal move using another checker. If there are no checkers that can be legally moved, the player is required to remove a checker from the next highest point. A player is under no obligation to bear off if they can make an otherwise legal move.



**Figure 5.** White rolls and bears off two checkers.

A player must have all of their active checkers in their home board in order to bear off. If a checker is hit during the bear-off process, the player must bring that checker back to their home board before continuing to bear off. The first player to bear off all fifteen checkers wins the game.

## Doubling

Backgammon is played for points. Each game starts at one point. During the course of the game, a player who feels they have a sufficient advantage may propose doubling the points. They may do this only at the start of their own turn and before they have rolled the dice.

A player who is offered a double may refuse it, in which case they concede the game and give their opponent one point. Otherwise, they must accept the double and play on for the new higher stake. A player who accepts a double becomes the owner of the Cube and only they may offer the next double.

Subsequent doubles in the same game are called redoubles. If a player refuses a redouble, they must give the number of points that were at stake prior to the redouble. Otherwise, they become the new owner of the Cube and the game continues at twice the previous stake. There is no limit to the number of redoubles in a game.

## Gammons and Backgammons

At the end of the game, if the losing player has borne off at least one checker, they lose only the value showing on the doubling Cube or only one point if there have been no doubles. HOWEVER, if the loser has *not* borne off any of their checkers, they are Gammoned and lose *twice* the value of the doubling Cube. But if the loser has not borne off any of their checkers and still has a checker on the bar or in the winner's home board, they are Backgammoned and loses *three times* the value of the doubling Cube.

\*original update and merger of 2009 U.S. Backgammon Rules & Procedures and 2013 U.S. Backgammon Clock Rules & Procedures by Ross D Gordon, Nov 2016. Revision 2017(a) 06/06/2017. Update and Implementation 07/04/2020. Updated from U.S. to American 09/01/21. Revision 2023(a) Equipment Failure 03/02/2023.

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