

J: The Misere Connection Game rules

By Rich Hutnik (copyright 2011)

Part of the Games on Half a Checkerboard Series

This game is a Connection game on an 8x4 board. A unique feature of the game is that it has a misere win condition where a player wins if they force their opponent to connect parts of the board together. The name comes from one of the win conditions where the layout can look like the letter J, which is similar to the connection game Y in regards to the name coming from a layout of the game's victory condition.

Number of players: 2.

Object of the game: To be the first player to connect their portion of the sides of the board longways to the their side of the board on the other side, without connecting their two sides of the board: A player can also win if they force their opponent into a place where they have no legal moves.

Equipment:

Half a checkerboard: The half checkerboard is longer (8 spaces) than it is wide (4 spaces).

12 checkers of one color, and 12 checkers of another color. These checkers start out in a reserve area off the board and enter into the board as the game progresses. In the rules below, the pieces are white and black.

Board layout:

D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8
C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8
B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8
A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8

The black and white lines and letters and numbers in the above diagram are not on the board, and are included in these rules for illustration purposes. The spaces with black and white lines, if connected, will result in a win or loss for a player. Spaces above without the white or black lines on them are spaces players can remove one of their pieces from during the optional piece removal phase of their turn.

Playing the Game:

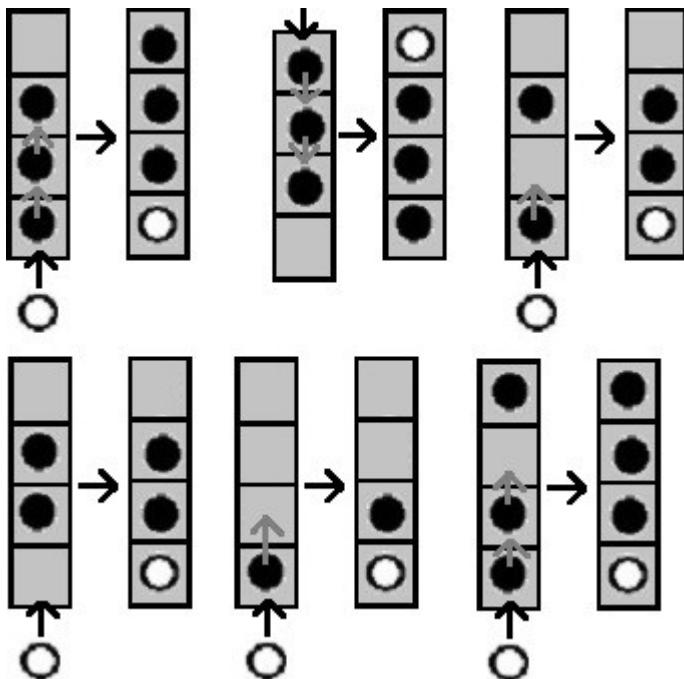
Every turn, players perform a **mandatory move** of entering a piece onto the board, and then they MAY perform an **optional move** where they take a piece from the middle area of the board. The explanation of the mandatory and optional moves follow below:

A: Mandatory: A player enters a piece on the board, pushing other pieces to new spaces. A piece will enter the board on any of the these spaces vertically: A1-A8, D1-D8. Or horizontally: A1, B1, C1, D1, A8, B8, C8, D8. These spaces in the diagram below are marked with white or black lines.

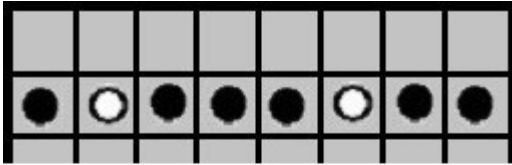
D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8
C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8
B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8
A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8

When entering vertically on spaces A1-A8, a piece will push the piece there into the B row space in the same numbered column, and then any piece in the B row space into the same column into the C row, and then the C row piece into the D row. And, the reverse happens when players enter a piece on a space on D1-D8, in that the piece currently in row D spaced gets pushed to C, and any piece in there is pushed to the B row space in the same column, and any piece that was on the B row space in the same column, and then any piece in the B row column is pushed into the A row.

When entering horizontally on spaces A1-D1 (on left side), a piece will push the any piece there into the space in the same, and any piece in the B row into the same column into the C row of the same column, into the D row, and so on, until a piece being pushed into a new row is pushed into an column 1, or an empty space. And, the reverse happens when players enter a piece on a space on A8-D8, in that the piece currently in 8 column gets pushed to the 7 column, and the piece in the 7 column gets pushes in the 6 column and so on, until a piece being pushed into a new row is pushed into an column 1, or an empty space. The diagrams below show examples of pieces entering vertically (pieces entering horizontally work the same way):



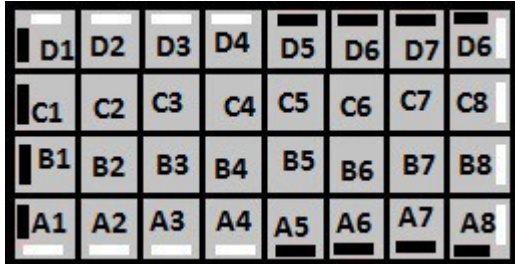
A piece is not permitted to enter into a column (a space in A or D rows) or row (a space in column 1 or 8) if all the spaces are occupied. See diagrams below:



Piece may not enter horizontally into fully occupied row above or vertically into fully occupied column on left.

If a player is unable to perform this mandatory move at the start of their turn, they lose the game, this will happen if a player either forgets, or is unable, to perform the optional move below during their last turn.

B: Optional: A player takes one of their pieces from the middle area and put it in their reserve, to enter again in a future turn. Middle area consists of spaces: B2-B7, and C2-C7, and a piece taken from there must not be in the same row or column that the player entered a piece into this turn. If a player enters his last piece onto the board from his reserve, that player will need to perform this optional move to take a piece from the central area, or risk losing the game the following turn. This taking of a piece off the board leaves behind an empty space. In the diagram below, the spaces without either a white or black line on them (B2-B7 and C2-C7) players are able to remove one of their pieces from:



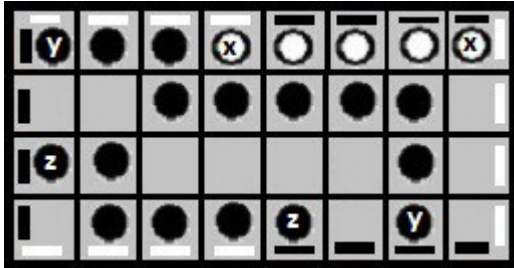
Players are only permitted to remove a piece that does not share the same column or row as the piece they just entered into the board. For example, if player entered a piece on B8, they would not be permitted from taking a piece from any space on the B row. Or, if a player entered a piece on the A5 space, they would not be permitted to take any piece on the 5 column (B5 or C5).

Ending the Game

Game ends when a win condition is reached. This win condition can either be reaching a winning configuration (for a normal win), or forcing one's opponent reaching a losing position (for a misere win).

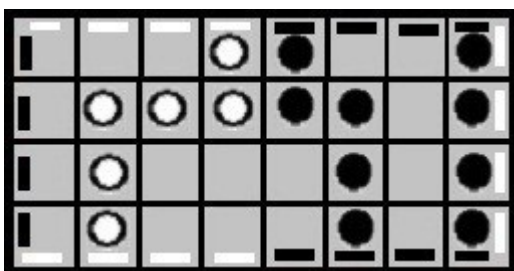
Winning configurations: A player wins the game if they are the first player to connect their portion of the sides of the board longways to the their side of the board on the other side. A player can also win the game if they either for their opponent to connect the two sides of the board opposite one another, or to have no legal moves at the start of their turn.

Connection of pieces is done orthogonally (vertically or horizontally), not diagonally. A winning configuration of pieces for a player will resemble a J. In this, one player will try to connect chain of pieces starting at D5-D8 or A5-A8 to A1-D1, while the other player tries to connect spaces D1-D4 to A8-D8. The diagram below shows examples of winning configurations for each player:

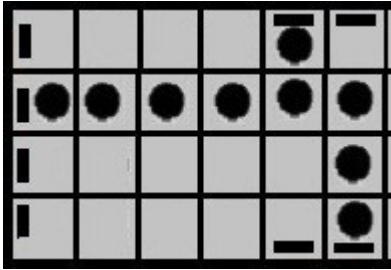


In this diagram above, player with the white pieces wins by forming a chain of pieces that start and end with the piece on the x space. The player with the black pieces wins by forming either chains that start and end on the y spaces, or the z spaces. In this diagram there is only one path to trace through the pieces connecting the y spaces and the z spaces, through a chain of pieces connected vertically or horizontally, not diagonally.

Losing (misere winning) configurations: A losing configuration for the player who connects a space on A1-A4 or D1-A4 spaces player to A8-D8 would be connecting a chain of pieces from A1-A4 to D1-D4 . The losing configuration for the player trying to connect A5-A8 or D5-D8 to A1-D1 would be connecting A5-A8 to D5-D8 would be a loss. Examples of 3 losing configurations can be seen below:



In the game, if a player manages to connect to have both a losing or winning configuration, the player obtaining a losing configuration supercedes all. If a player, by entering a piece onto the board generates a winning configuration for both players, or a losing configuration for their opponent, they win the game, unless they also generate a losing configuration for themselves, in which case, they lose the game. The diagram below is another example of a losing configuration. The black line spaces represent areas players attempt to connect:

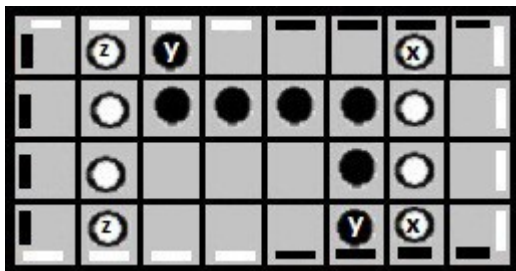


Connect two horizontal line spaces on opposite ends of the board are a loss, even as the player has a win by connecting a space with a horizontal line on it to a space with a vertical line on it. Even if the player causes an opponent to also obtain a losing position, during the same turn they enter in new piece along with their own losing position, the player doing this during their turn loses the game.

Variant:

Connecting any two parts of the long side of the board is a loss: In the normal game, if players connect two of the short sides of the board that are marked with their color in these roles, it counts as a loss. In this variant, the lose condition still overrides the win condition, but now players can lose the game if they connect any two sides along the long sides of the board, and not just their color. This variant is introduced to provide an easier opportunity to reverse momentum in the game.

The next diagram shows examples of losing game configurations. In addition to the normal loss condition, marked with the White pieces that have Z on their ends, the White pieces with X on the ends, and the Black pieces with y on the ends, are also loss configurations.



Additional Mandatory move type, Free placement: For players who want to do a freer placement in the game, for more dynamic play, it is suggested the following move type be allowed during the mandatory move phase of a turn during the game. In this, a player can place a piece on ANY of the 32 spaces on the board, that is doesn't contain a piece, at the time of placing. Doing this doesn't push pieces. This is an additional move type besides the slide entering of pieces on the outside of the board. Players either do free placement or slide move during their mandatory move type during a turn, not both. The restrictions for removing a piece are still in effect, where a player is not permitted to remove a piece that is in the same row or column as the piece just entered, during optional removal phase during a turn. It is suggested players play the game a few times without this rule, to feel how the basic flow works, before trying it with this rule.

About the Games on Half a Checkerboard Series:

The Games on Half a Checkerboard Series (and the games in it) is the creation of Rich Hutnik. It originated from an attempt by a game designer to adopt some of Rich Hutnik's prior game designs on other play areas to half a checkerboard. This initial attempt grew to create a mixture of games derived from classic game designs, to all new creations. Games in this Series all utilize half a regular 8 by 8 checkerboard and a mixture checkers and other common game equipment (such as dice or chess pieces). As of this time, there are a total of around 30 games. Go here for the most up to date list of available games (and their rules):

<http://boardgamegeek.com/geeklist/67989/games-in-the-games-on-half-a-checkerboard-series>