
Rootbound

Prepared by Mark on May 9, 2025.

Based on <https://cjffield.com/rules/rootbound.pdf>

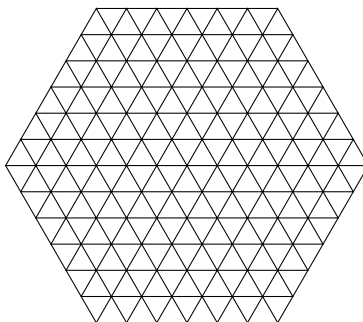
Playing the game:

You will need a pencil, an eraser, and a printed hexagonal board.

Draw your pieces lightly—you may need to erase them.

Turns alternate. Each player draws distinct pieces (for example, circles and squares).

An example board is drawn below. “Spaces” are the corners of the triangular cells, *not* the cells themselves. Points on the edge of the board are also spaces.



During the first turn of the game, the first player must place one piece onto any empty space. From then on, each player may place either one or two pieces onto empty spaces, respecting the restrictions below. Players may not skip their turn unless they have no legal move.

Claimed regions:

A *claimed region* is an area of empty spaces that is only adjacent to pieces of a single color.

No regions are considered “claimed” until both players have had a turn.

Dead groups:

A group of pieces is considered *dead* if it is cut off from all other same-colored groups and is not adjacent to a claimed region. At the end of each turn (except each player’s first), erase all dead pieces that belong to the inactive player.

Restrictions:

- A piece may not be placed inside a claimed region.
- A piece may not be placed adjacent to two (or more) same-colored pieces if those pieces are also neighbors of each other. In other words, you may not form small triangles of one color.
- When placing two pieces adjacent to each other in a turn, they may not form a straight line with a third pre-existing piece of their color.

Ending the game:

The game ends when both players run out of legal moves. Each player’s score is calculated by counting the number of empty spaces in regions they have claimed.

The player with the highest score wins.

Notes

- Each player needs to make multiple groups before the first player’s second turn. Otherwise, all their pieces will be removed from the game, resulting in an early loss. Do not make your first moves next to each other!
- Groups are easiest to secure near the corners or along the edges. Play there first.

