Ouroboros

An abstract strategy game for 2-4 players, best with 2 players.

by Ira Fay
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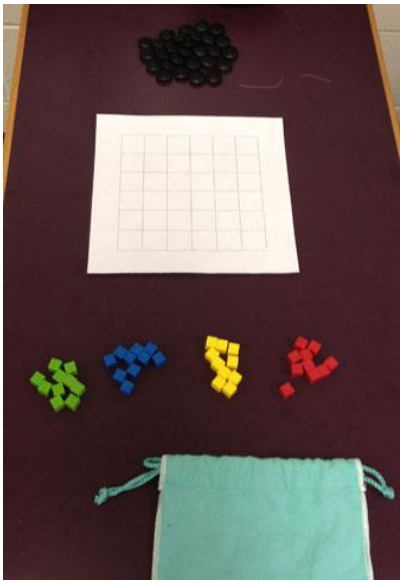


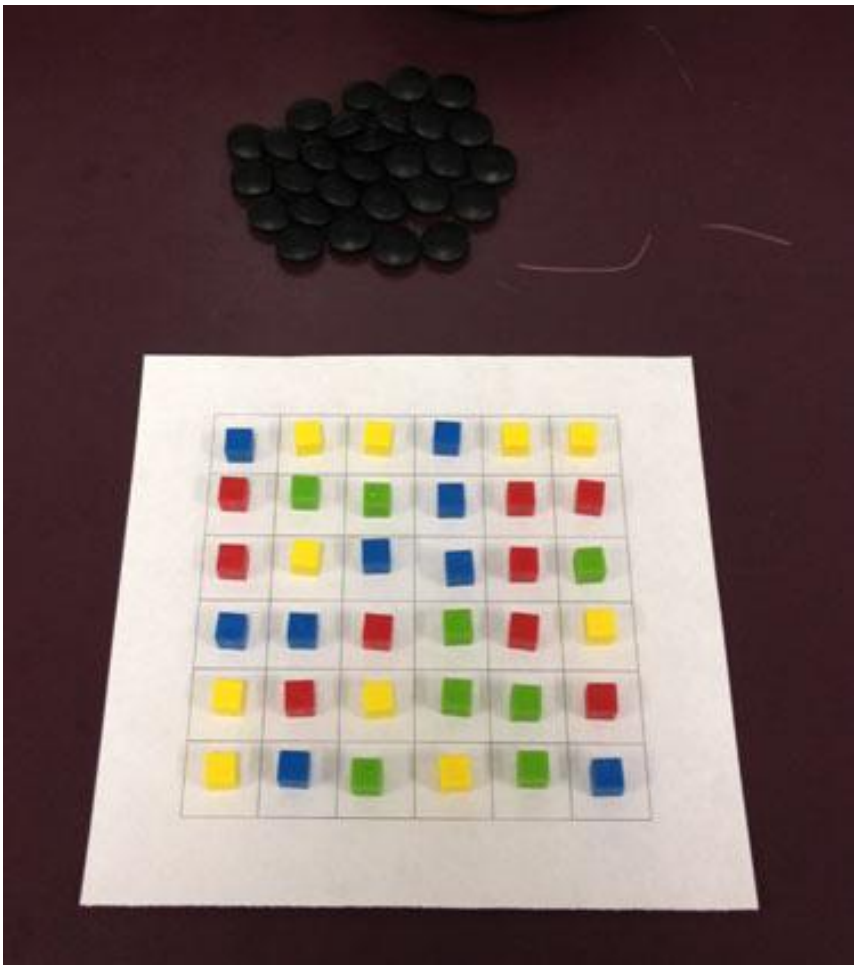
Materials

6x6 grid (included below)
40 cubes (10 of each color)
~10 stones (all the same color)

Instead of cubes and stones, you can use any other pieces, like coins, dice, or pawns.

Setup

Randomly put 1 cube on each square of the grid. There will be 4 cubes left over; they will not be used this game. An opaque bag may help randomize the setup.



Object of the Game
Be the first player to have zero cubes in your supply.

Note: Players start the game with zero cubes in their supply, but obviously do not win until the second turn or later.

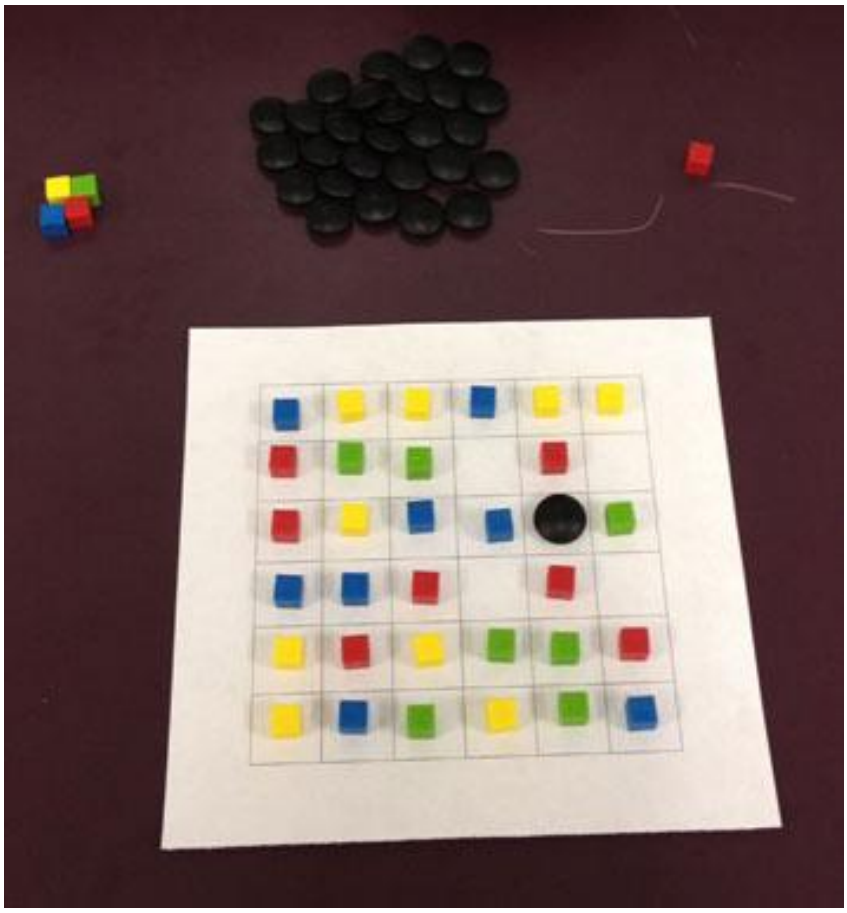
Gameplay
Randomly decide who goes first. Players alternate turns. Each turn, a player must do one of three things:

1) Place a stone
2) Remove two stones matching a pattern
3) Discard one cube from his or her supply

Place a Stone
If you choose to place a stone, you must **place it on a square that contains a cube**. You add that cube to your supply. In addition, you **choose the 4 adjacent squares** (horizontal + vertical) OR (diagonal) and give all the cubes from those squares to the next player.

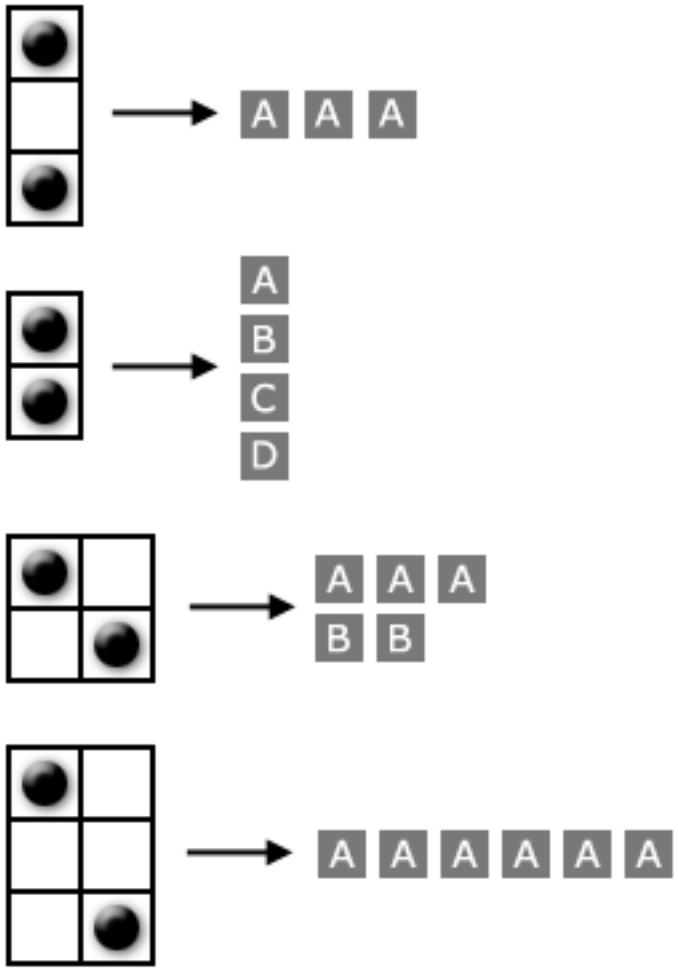
A sample first move of the game is shown below. The player on the right went first.

If some of the squares adjacent to the placed stone are empty, the next player simply gets as many cubes as are present. The player placing the stone chooses (diagonal) OR (horizontal + vertical) each time he or she places a stone.



Remove Two Stones Matching a Pattern

Instead of placing a stone, a player may remove two stones that match one of the patterns below, **as long as he or she also has the necessary cubes**. The player discards the matching cubes along with the two stones. These are the valid patterns:



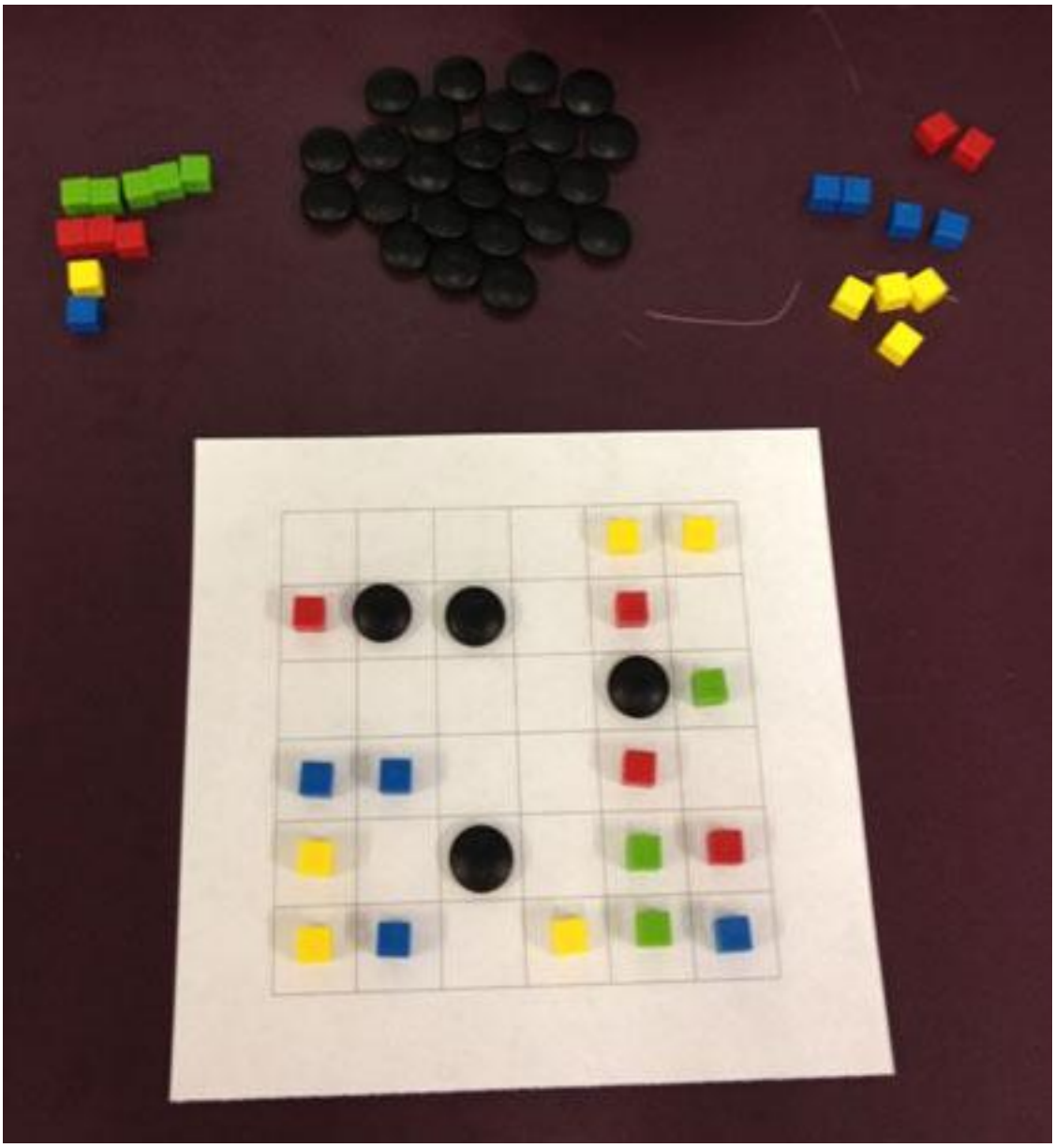
The first pattern requires 3 cubes of the same color. The second pattern requires 4 cubes of different colors. The third pattern requires 3 cubes of one color, and 2 cubes of a different color. The last pattern requires 6 cubes of the same color.

The patterns of stones may be rotated 90 degrees, 180 degrees, and/or mirrored/flipped, and the pattern is still a match.

Once the cubes are discarded, they are not used for the rest of the game.

Example of Removing Stones

In the picture below, the player on the left could remove the two adjacent stones from the board and discard 4 cubes of different colors. The player on the right could not do that, since he or she doesn't have 4 cubes of different colors.



Though there are two stones matching the 4th pattern above, neither player may remove them because they do not have 6 cubes of the same color.

Discard One Cube

The third option for a player's turn is to simply discard one cube from his or her supply. Once a cube is discarded, it is not used for the rest of the game.

FAQ

Q: Can I hide my cubes from my opponent?
A: The intended design is nothing hidden, but if the game would be more fun for all players to hide cubes, feel free!

Q: If there are three stones in a row, can I remove the two outside stones to match Pattern 1, or does the middle stone get in the way of the pattern?
A: You can make the match. Other stones do not get in the way of matches.

Q: Where can I get more information?
A: The gameplay video is here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgHZdu8swJI
You can see the full website here: http://globalgamejam.org/2012/ouroboros-6

Q: How long did it take to design this game?
A: This game was designed in one weekend for the 2012 Global Game Jam.

A Note for 3-4 Player Games

Ouroboros is best with 2 players, though playtests showed it also worked relatively well with 3 players. If you would like to play 4+ players, you may consider increasing the grid size and number of cubes.