Cheat Sheet Backgammon Rules

Backgammon Tables

Board Layout and Numbering

Numbering and Rolls from the Black point of view.

Outer Board   White's Home Board

13 14 15 16 17 18   19 20 21 22 23 24

12 11 10 9 8 7   6 5 4 3 2 1

Outer Board   Black's Home Board

Opening Roll	Opening Move	Alternative
2-1	13/11, 6/5	24/23, 13/11
3-1	8/5, 6/5	
3-2	13/11, 13/10	24/21, 13/11
4-1	24/23, 13/9	13/9, 6/5
4-2	8/4, 6/4	
4-3	13/10, 13/9	24/21, 13/9
5-1	24/23, 13/8	13/8, 6/5
5-2	24/22, 13/8	13/11, 13/8
5-3	8/3, 6/3	
5-4	24/20, 13/8	13/9, 13/8
6-1	13/7, 8/7	
6-2	24/18, 13/11	13/7, 7/5
6-3	24/18, 13/10	24/21, 21/15
6-4	8/2, 6/2	24/18, 13/9
6-5	24/18, 18/13	

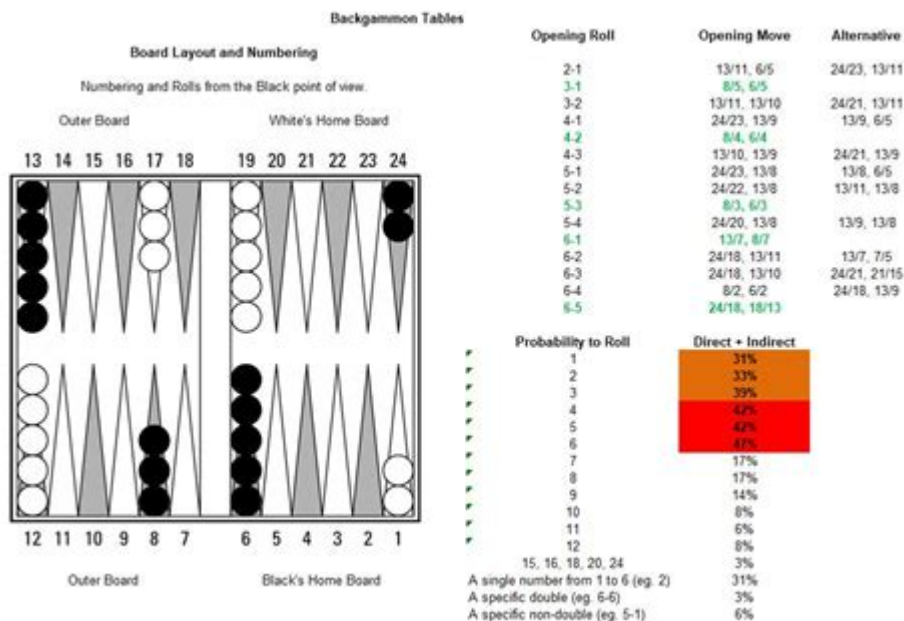| Probability to Roll	Direct + Indirect
1	31%
2	33%
3	39%
4	42%
5	42%
6	47%
7	17%
8	17%
9	14%
10	8%
11	6%
12	8%
15, 16, 18, 20, 24	3%
A single number from 1 to 6 (eg. 2)	31%
A specific double (eg. 6-6)	3%
A specific non-double (eg. 5-1)	6%

Cheat sheet backgammon rules are essential for both beginners and experienced players who want to refresh their memory and improve their game. Backgammon is one of the oldest board games in existence, combining elements of strategy and luck. Understanding the basic rules can significantly enhance your experience and performance. In this article, we will provide a comprehensive cheat sheet covering the fundamental rules of backgammon, including setup, movement, hitting, bearing off, and more.

Game Setup

Before diving into the rules, it's essential to understand how to set up the backgammon board. The backgammon board consists of 24 triangular points, known as "blots," arranged in four quadrants.

Board Layout

1. Home Board: Each player has a home board consisting of the last six points in their respective quadrants.
2. Outer Board: The points outside the home board are referred to as the outer board.
3. Starting Position: Each player starts with 15 checkers positioned as follows:
- 2 checkers on the 24-point
- 5 checkers on the 13-point
- 3 checkers on the 8-point
- 5 checkers on the 6-point

Objective of the Game

The main objective of backgammon is to move all of your checkers into your home board and then bear them off. The first player to bear off all 15 checkers wins the game.

Basic Rules of Movement

Understanding how to move your checkers is crucial for success in backgammon. Players take turns rolling two six-sided dice and moving their checkers according to the numbers rolled.

Moving Checkers

1. Rolling the Dice: Each player rolls two dice at the start of their turn.
2. Moving Checkers: Players may move one or two checkers based on the numbers shown on the dice.
- If a player rolls a 5 and a 3, they can move one checker 5 spaces and another checker 3 spaces, or one checker a total of 8 spaces (5 + 3).
3. Legal Moves:
- A checker can only land on an open point, which is defined as either an empty point, a point occupied by the player's own checkers, or a point occupied by a single opponent checker (blot).
- If a player lands on a point occupied by a single opponent checker, they hit it, sending it to the bar.

Double Rolls

If a player rolls doubles (e.g., two 4s), they can move a total of four times using the number shown on the dice. For example, with doubles of 4, the player can move four checkers 4 spaces each.

Hitting and Entering from the Bar

Hitting an opponent's checker adds an exciting strategic layer to backgammon. When you hit an opponent's checker, it is placed on the bar and must re-enter the game.

Hitting Opponent Checkers

- If you land on a point occupied by a single opponent checker, you hit it and send it to the bar.
- The opponent must then re-enter their checker on their next turn.

Re-entering from the Bar

1. Entering Checkers: The opponent must re-enter their checker onto the board by moving it to an open point in their home board corresponding to the number rolled.
2. Restrictions on Movement: A player cannot move other checkers until all their checkers that are on the bar have been re-entered.

Bearing Off Checkers

Once all of a player's checkers are in their home board, they can begin the process of bearing off.

How to Bear Off

1. Initiating Bearing Off: A player can bear off a checker when all checkers are in their home board.
2. Bearing Off Procedure:
- To bear off, a player rolls the dice and removes a checker from the corresponding point.
- For example, if a player rolls a 3, they may bear off a checker from the 3-point.
3. No Checkers on Higher Points: A player cannot bear off a checker from a point if there are still checkers on higher points.

Winning the Game

The game of backgammon ends when one player bears off all their checkers. However, there are variations in how games can be won.

Types of Wins

1. Normal Win: The first player to bear off all checkers wins the game.
2. Gammon Win: If the opponent has not borne off any checkers, the winning player scores a gammon, which counts as double the score.
3. Backgammon Win: If the opponent has not moved any checkers into their home board, the winning player scores a backgammon, worth triple the score.

Common Strategies in Backgammon

In addition to knowing the rules, employing effective strategies can significantly improve your gameplay.

Key Strategies

1. Control the Center: Try to control the central points of the board to restrict your opponent's

movement.
2. Blot Hitting: Aim to hit your opponent's blots whenever possible to disrupt their game plan.
3. Building a Block: Create a blockade by occupying consecutive points to hinder your opponent's movement.
4. Timing Your Moves: Be strategic about when to bear off your checkers, especially if your opponent still has checkers in play.

Conclusion

This cheat sheet on backgammon rules provides a solid foundation for both new and experienced players. By understanding the setup, movement, hitting, and bearing off, you can elevate your game and enjoy this classic pastime. Whether you're playing casually with friends or in a competitive setting, mastering these rules and strategies will help you become a more formidable backgammon player.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the basic rules of movement in backgammon?

In backgammon, players move their checkers around the board based on the roll of two dice. Each die represents a separate move for one checker or two separate moves for two checkers. A player can move their checkers forward to an open point or to a point occupied by their own checkers.

What is the purpose of hitting an opponent's checker?

Hitting an opponent's checker sends it to the bar, which means the opponent must re-enter it on their next turn before making any other moves. This can disrupt their strategy and give you an advantage in the game.

How does bearing off work in backgammon?

Bearing off is the process of removing your checkers from the board once all your checkers are in your home board. Players can bear off a checker by rolling a number that corresponds to the point where the checker resides. If no checkers are in the home board, players cannot bear off.

What happens if a player cannot make a legal move?

If a player cannot make a legal move, they must forfeit their turn. This can happen if all the possible moves are blocked by the opponent's checkers or if there are no available moves based on the rolled dice.

What is the significance of the bar in backgammon?

The bar is the central divider on the backgammon board. When a checker is hit, it is placed on the bar. The player must re-enter any checkers on the bar back onto the board before they can make regular moves. This adds a strategic element, as players must manage both their own and their opponent's checkers.

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