

# HYPOTHERMIA

## The Journal of Icehouse Gaming

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Issue #15

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### MELTDOWN

An Introduction by Dr. Cool

Greetings, Icers!

Welcome to this year's Icehouse newsletter! In case you've been sitting in the dark, I should first point out that we've gone paperback! That's right, Looney Labs has published an actual Icehouse book, called *Playing with Pyramids*, which contains rules for 12 of our best games. Ask for it at your gamestore!

As if that weren't enough, this issue contains rules for more games than any other Hypothermia to date. The Icehouse email list has been swamped by new Icehouse game designs, and we culled a few of our favorites from the herd to include in this issue. Inside you'll find *seven* new games designed by various Icehouse fans... including one by a guy we've never even met yet! (Way to go, Brian!)

**Hailstorm** and **Cracked ICE** fit nicely into the "frivolous party games" genre. You can learn them in minutes, and they have a tiddlywinks/pick-up sticks feel that is enjoyed by people of all ages. (I'm confident that I can even convince my "non-gamer" friends to play these.)

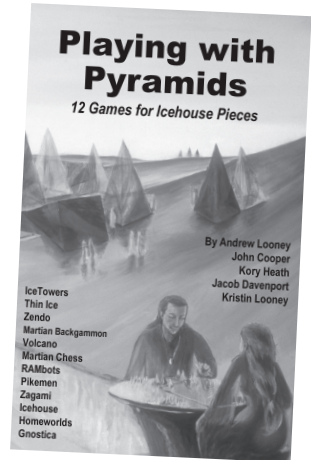
If you're interested in quick 2-player pure-strategy games, try **Tic Tac Doh!** and **Martian Mud Wrestling**. Both of these games can use the 5x5 board in the centerfold, which is also useful for playing or inventing other Icehouse games.

**Tic Tac Doh!** works with just one stash, as does **Rotatory**, a solitaire brain twister of a puzzle, with a virtually limitless number of starting setups. On the other hand, if you happen to have 9 stashes and already know the game **Volcano** (which is included in *PwP*), you'll love the advanced variant **Mega-Volcano**.

And finally, if you have a chessboard, try **Branches and Twigs and Thorns**. (Some of you may recognize this as a revision of **Martian Go**.)

Hope you enjoy trying these games out and coming up with your own winning Icehouse game designs. Speaking of winning, last year's Origins was very special for us. Icehouse won a Calliope, which is the game designers' version of the Oscar! Andy and I were stunned, and honored.

— Dr Cool



# Hailstorm

by Andrew Looney

Hailstorm is a quick, easy, luck-based game intended to feel vaguely like craps or roulette. If Icehouse pieces are the new playing cards, then perhaps this shall be the first of many games that will be played in the casinos of the future, when people who enjoy losing money when they play will be able to do so while playing with pyramids.

## How to Play

- On your turn, remove a piece from the bag (without looking).
- Hold the piece steady, at least 2 inches above the table. Drop the piece.
- If it lands upright, you capture it.
- If it lies flat and is pointing at another piece, you capture any and all pieces it points at.
- If it lands in any “weird” position (neither upright nor flat), pick the piece up and drop it again.
- If a piece is knocked off the table, return it to the bag.
- If the piece you dropped falls off, drop it again.
- If you capture a redundant piece (that is, a piece of a size and color you already have) put it back in the bag.
- Whoever is first to capture a complete “tree” (large + medium + small) of a single color wins the game!

## Stuff You Need



2+ players



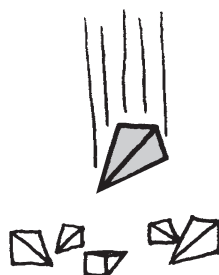
5-10 minutes



3+ stashes



an opaque cloth bag,  
judging tools, chips



## Casino Rules

**Chips:** Everyone needs a pile of chips of equal value.

**Ante:** On each turn, if you capture nothing, you must add a chip to the pot.

**Raising:** Whenever a player gains a second non-redundant piece of one color, that player may choose to increase the ante by one chip.

**Folding:** A player may forfeit the game at any time, and must do so if ever unable to pay the required ante.

**Bonus:** If you capture more than one piece on your turn, you may take from the pot one chip for each additional piece you captured.

**Judging:** Unless the two pieces are very close together, it's often difficult to be sure of exactly what (if anything) your piece is pointing at. When there's money on the line, be sure you have an impartial judge standing by to officially resolve all disputes. Tools to help with judging (such as a piece of string, a yard stick, or, best of all, a laser-line generator) are recommended.

**Winning:** Whoever wins gets the pot!

# Cracked ICE

by Andrew Plotkin, Daniel Efran, and Elliott Evans

An Icehouse game that you play on a CD!

## Setup

Place the additional large Icehouse piece in the middle of the table. Balance the disc on it, silvery side up, so that the point of the pyramid goes through the hole in the center of the disc, and the disc is level.

## How to Play

Choose a player to start the first round. Take turns placing one piece from your stash on the disc. You may not touch the disc or any pieces other than the one you are placing. You should not move any of the pieces that have already been placed. Play all pieces upright. You may not place a piece so that it is resting on or covering any pieces that have already been played. You may not place a piece over the tip of the piece that supports the disc. Even if the disc seems full, you must still attempt to place a piece.

If you place a piece and “the ice does not crack”, play passes to the next player. “The ice cracks” if the edge of the disc touches the table, any piece on the disc touches the table, or any piece falls or slides off the disc onto the table.

If you place a piece and the ice cracks, you have lost the round. Take back all of the pieces you have placed this round. Remove the other players’ pieces from play. They remain safe for the rest of the game. You start the next round. If you crack the ice playing the first piece in a round, you may either try again (with that piece or another) or pass to the next player.

## How to Win

If you place your last piece without cracking the ice, you win!

## Stuff You Need



3 to 5 players



10-25 minutes



1 stash per player,  
plus 1 large piece



a compact disc (CD)



# Tic Tac Doh!

by Brian Schultze

A simple, single-stash strategy game for two.

## Goal

Play the third piece of the same size in a row in an imaginary 3 by 3 grid.

## Imagine a 3x3 Grid

Players take turns placing Icehouse pieces into an imaginary 3 by 3 grid of 1" squares. Since you create this grid as you go, you won't know where out of bounds is until after the first few turns.

## Turn Options

On your turn, do one of the following:

- **Fill a Square:** Play any unused piece into an empty space. It can be anywhere – center, corner, or edge – just as long as it keeps all pieces bounded within a three by three grid.
- **Build a Tree:** Add to or start a “tree” by playing a medium on a single large, a small on a single medium, or a small on a medium that is already on a large.
- **Build a Nest:** Add to or start a “nest” by playing a medium on a single small, a large on a single medium, or a large on a medium that is already on a small.

## Winning

When you play a piece that causes three pieces to be in a row vertically, horizontally, or diagonally, you win. For determining three pieces in a row, a nest counts only as its outermost piece, whereas a tree counts as any of the pieces it contains. So, a complete tree (a small on a medium on a large) counts as any and all sizes, but a full nest (a large on a medium on a small) counts only as a large.

## Notes

- A square cannot contain both a nest and a tree.
- Once you've let go of a piece, it is played and may not be retracted. (Feel free to yell “Doh!” if you realize too late that you made a mistake....)
- If you have three stashes, use one size from each. This makes it easier to see the possible wins and looks pretty cool (especially using red, yellow, and orange).
- This game plays well on a 5x5 grid (aka a “volcano board”) provided the first piece is placed on the center square.

## Stuff You Need



2 players



5 minutes



1 stash



no extra equipment

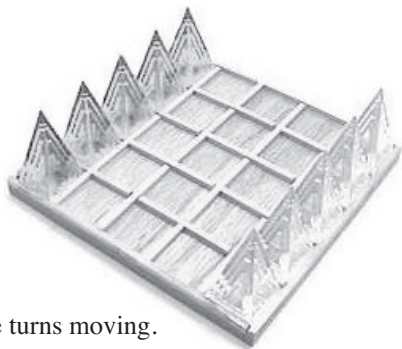
# Martian Mud Wrestling

by Elliott C. Evans

A 2-player Icehouse game with 3 rules.

## Setup

Place one full nest of Icehouse pieces on each square of the row that's along the edge of the board that is closest to you. Your opponent sets up along the opposite edge.



Take turns moving.

## The Moving Rule

On your turn, move any one piece of your color that is on top of a stack to any adjacent square (including diagonals), and stack it on top of any pieces that are already there.

## The Sinking Rule

After your move, if the destination stack has fewer points touching the board than not, the stack sinks into the mud and all pieces in it are removed from the game.

## The Losing Rule

If it's your turn and you cannot make a move, you lose. If your opponent also cannot make a move, you both lose.



## Stuff You Need



2 players



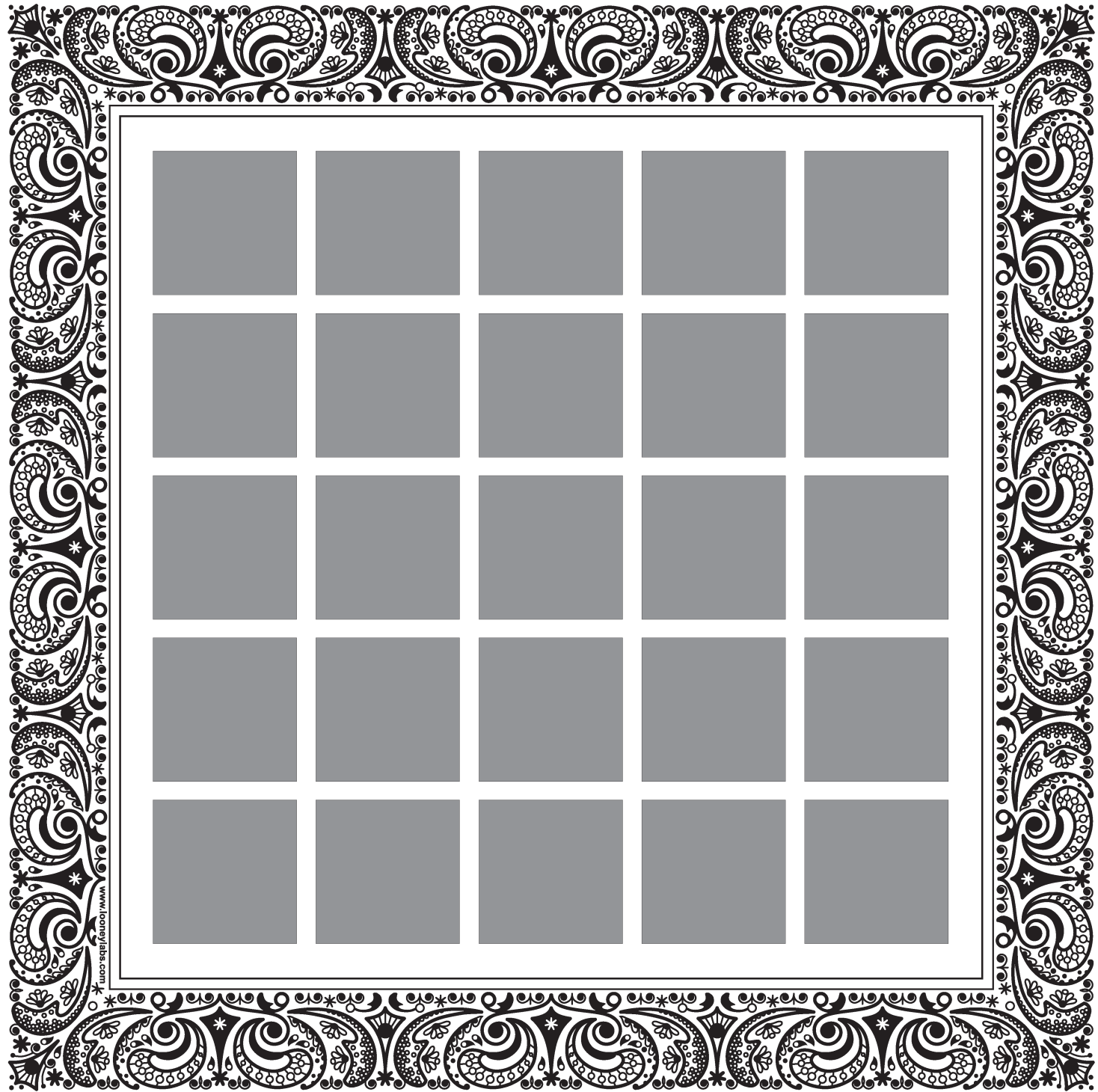
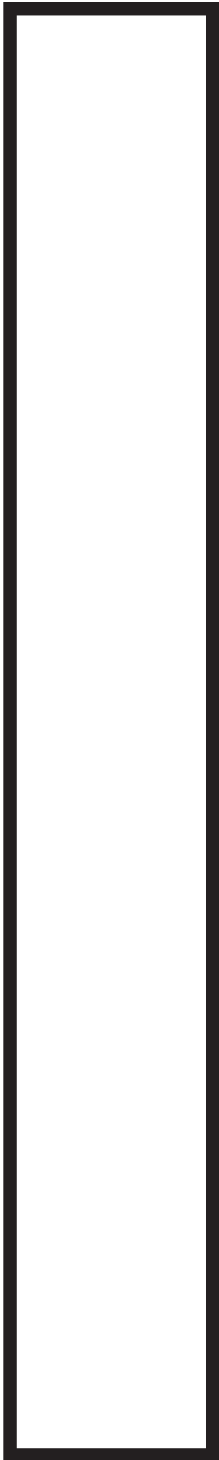
15-30 minutes

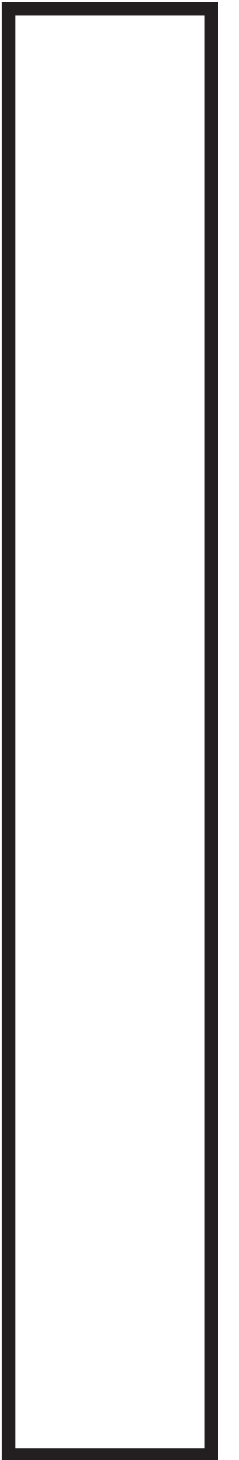


2 stashes



a 5x5 grid of  
1-inch squares



# Branches and Twigs and Thorns

by Andrew Plotkin

This elegant little strategy game is turn-based (unlike Icehouse or IceTowers), and there is no luck involved. You'll need a chessboard, a stash of Icehouse pieces for each player, and a collection of tokens (at least ten per player). This game can also be played with three, five, or six players, but for that you'll need Eeyore's Martian Chessboard sections. (see <http://www.ee0r.com/tri-chess/>)

## Stuff You Need



2 or 4 players



20-40 minutes



2+ stashes



a chessboard and  
10 tokens each

Begin by giving each player a stash of fifteen pyramids, and five tokens. Decide who goes first.

## Four Player Setup

Lay out the chessboard. The first player places a single token (from the pot) in any square. This represents a null square — a hole in the board where no-one may play. The second player then places another single token, forming a second null. (He may not place the null so as to completely isolate part of the board. Every square must remain connected. Diagonals don't count.)

The third player places a cluster of four tokens in any remaining square. This represents a root square. The fourth player places another cluster of four, forming a second root. (It is legal for root squares to "isolate" part of the board. Roots are not holes.) Note that 60 squares remain unoccupied. This is exactly the number of pyramids on players' stashes.

## Two Player Setup

Fold the chessboard in half (or cover half of it), producing a rectangular board. The first player places a single token, defining a null square, as defined above. The second player places a cluster of four tokens, defining a root square.

## Other Numbers of Players

- Three players: the first player places a null, and the other two players place roots.
- Five players: the first two players place nulls, the other three players place roots.
- Six players: the first three players place nulls, the next three players place roots.

## Playing

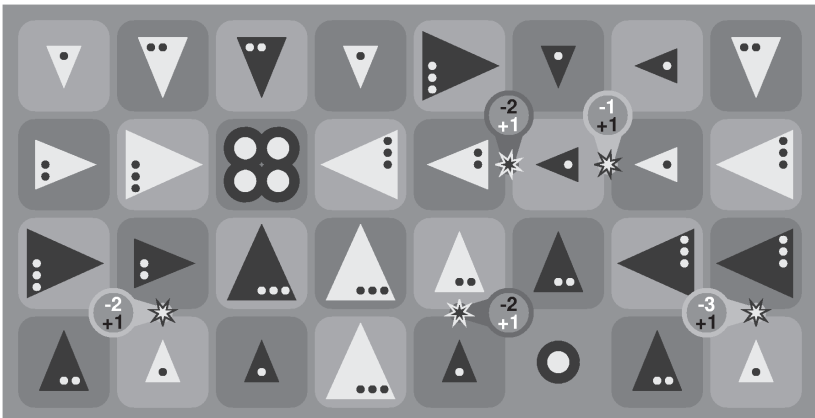
Players take turns. On your turn, **you place one pyramid in an empty square**. The pyramid must be adjacent to a square which is occupied, either by a root or by another pyramid. You must place it lying down, and **pointing at the adjacent occupied square**. You may not place a piece in, or pointing at, a null square. If there is more than one adjacent occupied square, you decide which one to point at. Diagonals don't count.

## Scoring

- Each player begins with five points.
- When you put down a piece pointing at the root, that's safe.
- When you put down a piece pointing at another of your own pieces, that's also safe.
- When you put down a piece pointing at an enemy piece, you take a **penalty**, and the opponent you pointed at gets a **bonus**.
- You are penalized according to **the size of the enemy piece you are pointing at**: one, two, or three points. Put that many tokens into the pot.
- The player you pointed at is rewarded according to **the size of the piece you pointed at him**. He takes one, two, or three tokens from the pot. (If you need to pay more tokens to the pot than you currently have, every player including yourself should take five more tokens from the pot. This does not change the standing of the game, since only relative scores matter.)
- At the end of the game, whoever has the most tokens wins.

## Sample Game

Here is a completed two-player game. The null square (marked with one token) is on the right-side bottom edge; the root (marked with a four-token cluster) is near the top left. In this game, there are only five moves in which one player pointed at the other. Black made two of these; White, who moved first, made the other three. Each player started with five tokens, so after adding in the penalties and bonuses for each player, the final score is: White 1, Black 4. Black has won.





## Strategies

Obviously, **pointing at the enemy is bad**. You want to spread a tree of your own pieces across the board, so that you can always add new pieces to your own tree, and never be forced to grow off your opponents' trees.

If you can surround an open area, so that you're covering more than your fair share of the board, then eventually an opponent will be forced to play inside that area — growing from one of your pieces. Every time an opponent plays a small pyramid, he's making himself vulnerable. Do you want to jump on it, choking off his tree and giving yourself more space, for a mere one-point penalty? If you wait, you may have to do it later — on your opponent's terms — perhaps losing two or three points.

Of course, you have small pyramids too. You want to play a small pyramid when you attack a vulnerability, so that your opponent gets only a one-point bonus. But then your piece is vulnerable as well. You have five vulnerable pieces, five average pieces, and five strong pieces. Eventually you'll have to play them all. The strategy is deciding when and where.

Aggressive play is not always rewarded, but neither is very defensive play. The last few moves are critical, as the last few open areas are filled in, and players are forced to play their last pyramids.

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# Mega-Volcano

A Volcano Variant for 9 Icehouse Colors

If you dig Volcano and you happen to have a full set of 9 Icehouse stashes, here's an advanced version of the game. It's played just like regular Volcano, but with the following differences:

First, it uses a 6x6 board-space, instead of the 5x5. Put the 7 translucent colors together in nests, and arrange them however you wish within the 6x6 space, leaving one hole open in one of the centermost squares. Fill in this last space with a single nest from the white stash, then place the 5 small blacks onto the red pieces just as you would in the standard game. (Set aside the other black and white pieces... they won't be used.)

## Stuff You Need



2 to 5 players



30 - 60 minutes



9 stashes



the rules to Volcano

The game then plays as before, except that now you need all 7 colors to trigger the end. The white pieces are not counted towards this total, because they are treated as wildcards. During score-counting, a white piece can be considered any other color you wish, thus making them very useful for completing monochrome trees. More importantly, any player who captures all 3 of the white pieces automatically wins the game!

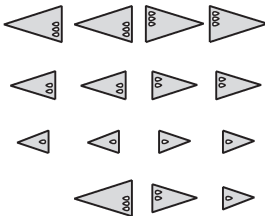
# Rotatory

by Dave Chalker

Rotatory is a single-stash puzzle game for one. It is special among puzzle games in that there are no wrong moves; it is possible to solve a puzzle at any state.

## Setup

Arrange the pieces of your Icehouse stash in a 4x4 grid (with one empty space) either according to a preset puzzle or randomly, with all the pieces facing in orthogonal directions. Here's an easy one to start with:



## Stuff You Need

	1 player
	5 minutes
	1 stash
	no extra equipment

## The Object

To have all the pieces pointing in the same direction.

## How to Play

Pick one piece, and rotate it one 90° turn either clockwise or counterclockwise. Whatever piece it then points to is rotated 90° in the same direction.



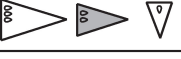


Then, if the original piece is...

- **Small:** Stop there.
- **Medium:** If the piece you just rotated (the “active piece”) is pointing at another piece, then that piece is rotated 90° in the original direction. Stop there.
- **Large:** Same as medium, but once more.

If at any point a piece is pointing at nothing (either the blank space on the grid or the edge of the board), the process stops. After you stop, you may make another move. Continue until all pieces are pointing in the same direction after all rotations are done. You win!

To increase the challenge, add this rule: rather than stopping whenever a piece points at nothing, imagine it can “wrap around”, thus allowing a piece to point at the other side of the grid. This enables each piece to carry out all of its rotations. (Be warned, however, that this could leave you with a puzzle that can't be solved.)

## Sample Chain Reaction

<b>1:</b>		<p>This diagram depicts what happens if you choose to rotate the large piece clockwise.</p> <p>In each step, the shaded piece is the one that was just rotated.</p>
<b>2:</b>		
<b>3:</b>		
<b>4:</b>		
<b>5:</b>		

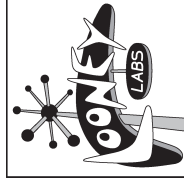
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## The Fun Continues Online!

- **More puzzles for Rotatory:**  
[wunderland.com/WTS/Dave/games/](http://wunderland.com/WTS/Dave/games/)
- **Eeyore's Martian Chessboard:**  
[ee0r.com/tri-chess/](http://ee0r.com/tri-chess/)
- **Rules for basic Volcano:**  
[wunderland.com/WTS/Kristin/Games/Volcano.html](http://wunderland.com/WTS/Kristin/Games/Volcano.html)
- **The Icehouse e-mail list:**  
[LooneyLabs.com](mailto:LooneyLabs.com)
- **Lots and lots of other new games:**  
[IcehouseGames.com](http://IcehouseGames.com)