

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Readers who want to know more about Agon can further their researches with the following books:

Bell, R. C. *Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations*, vol. 2, pp. 61-63. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1979.

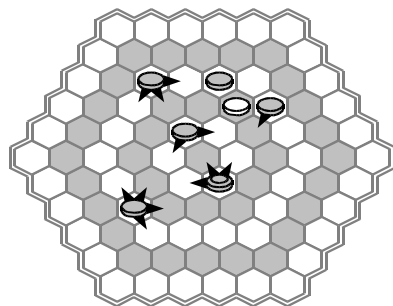
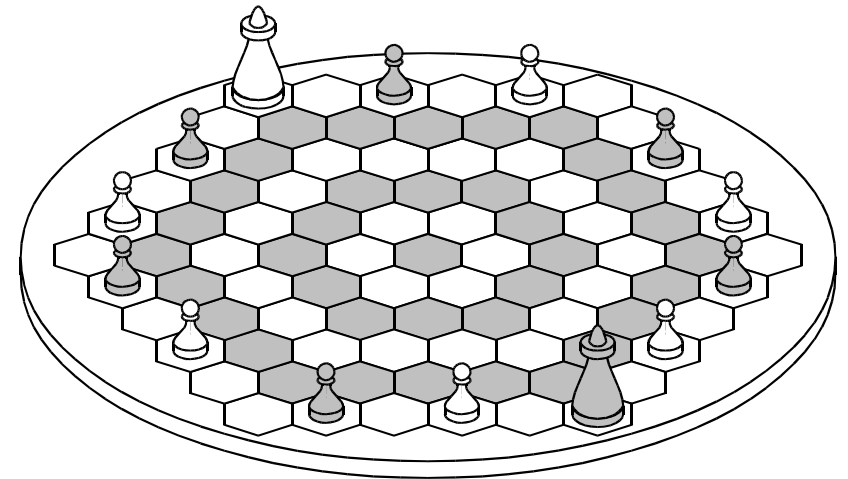
Bell, R. C. *The Boardgame Book*, pp. 40-41. London: Marshall Cavendish Ltd., 1979.

Parlett, D. *The Oxford History of Board Games*, pp. 146-147. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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## AGON

by Damian Walker



*Illustration 3: some example moves for black. The rightmost piece will capture the white enemy if it moves as indicated. Note that only the queen can move to the centre.*

## INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

The game of *agon* is somewhat mysterious and very much ahead of its time. In appearance, it resembles one of the plethora of abstract board games created in the late 20th century, not least because of its use of a hexagonal board with hexagonal playing spaces. However, it is very much older than this.

The game was first mentioned in 1872, and its first recorded appearance in England was in a book of 1890. It was published by Jaques of London some time during the Victorian Era. Earlier mentions of it come from France, but state that

the game comes from outside France. Yet French table tops dating from the 1780s have been seen with the peculiar board pattern. Whether these are gaming tables or whether they bear the pattern by coincidence is not certain.

Agon is a game that can be regarded as part battle and part race. Each player has six guards and a queen, and from this the game is sometimes called *Queen's Guard*. The object for each player is to get his queen to the centre of the board with the help of her guards.

## HOW TO PLAY

There are a few minor variations. Standard rules are given first.

### Beginning the Game

1. Agon is played on a hexagonal board made of 91 hexagonal playing spaces, shown in Illustration 1. Each concentric layer for hexagons is so coloured that it is easy to see a playing space's distance from the centre of the board.

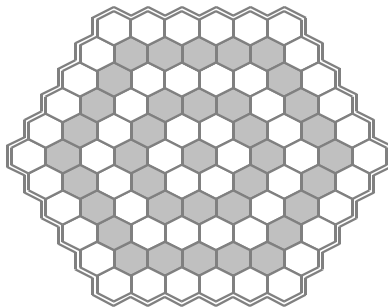


Illustration 1: the empty board.

2. The players each start with a queen and six guards. They are placed in a set configuration at the edge of the board, as shown in Illustration 2.

3. It is decided at random who moves first. Play then alternates between players.

### Moving the Pieces

4. In his turn a player moves a piece one space in any direction, excepting any direc-

tion that leads away from the centre, as shown in Illustration 3.

5. A piece may not land on or jump over another.

6. A piece may not move adjacent to two enemy pieces such that it is directly between them.

7. Only a queen may move to the central space.

### Capturing Pieces

8. If a piece becomes sandwiched between two enemies, it is captured. An example is shown in Illustration 3.

9. If the queen is captured, then its owner must, on his next turn, remove the queen from her predicament and place her on any other space on the board. This is instead of moving one of his pieces as described in rules 4-7.

10. Otherwise if one of his guards is captured, the player must remove the guard from his predicament, but the guard must be placed on a space at the edge of the board.

11. Only one captured piece may be so removed each turn; so a player may

arrest his opponent's strategy for a number of turns if he makes multiple captures at once.

### Ending the Game

12. A player has won the game when his queen rests on the central space, and her six guards are on the six spaces adjacent to her.

13. A player has lost the game if his six guards are adjacent to the central space but his queen is not between them, as this configuration prevents either player from ever winning the game.

### Variations

Some writers suggest a replacement for rule 2 which offers greater variety of game play. The queens are placed in opposite corners of the board as normal, but the guards are placed one at a time, in any space, alternating between players until all guards are placed. Play then proceeds as normal. Some say the queens themselves may be placed anywhere, like the guards. In both cases the queens are placed first.

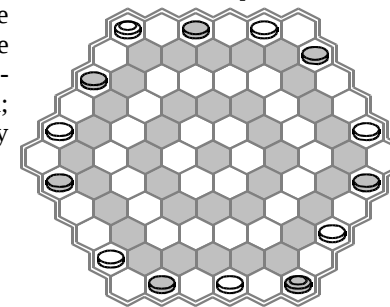


Illustration 2: the pieces set out for play.