

Chameleon

A Game For the Piecepack by Michael and Stephen Schoessow

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2-4 Players, 30-45 minutes

Equipment: 1 standard piecepack (with pawn saucers) plus 1 Four Seasons piecepack

Setup

Players choose colors and each player takes the pawn, die, and pawn saucer of his color. The remaining pawns and dice are not used in the game.

Shuffle the 48 tiles, suit side down. Randomly remove two tiles permanently from the game without looking at them.

Randomly choose another tile and place it suit side up in the playing area to start the board. This tile is called the *starter tile*. Turn over two more tiles and place them suit side up within convenient reach of all players to form the *wilds*. **The two starting wilds tiles must both be of different suits than the starter tile.** If one of the same suit as the starter tile is picked, shuffle it back into the supply of tiles and pick again.

Form the remaining 43 tiles into four facedown stacks so they conveniently take up less space. These stacks jointly constitute the *supply*. Each player now takes two tiles from the supply and conceals the suits and numbers from the other players. A player's two tiles constitute his *hand*.

The players' pawns are called *chameleons* and their dice are called *wasps*. Players place their pawn saucers in front of themselves to act as mascots, with the colored dots helping all players keep track of who is playing what color. All chameleons are placed on the starter tile. Players keep their wasps nearby, ready to enter the game.

Turn all the coins number side up. These, along with the unused pawn saucers form *the bank*. The coins represent points in the game equal to their face values, except the null coins, which represent 10 points each, and the saucers, which represent 50 points each. Figure 1 illustrates the game setup.

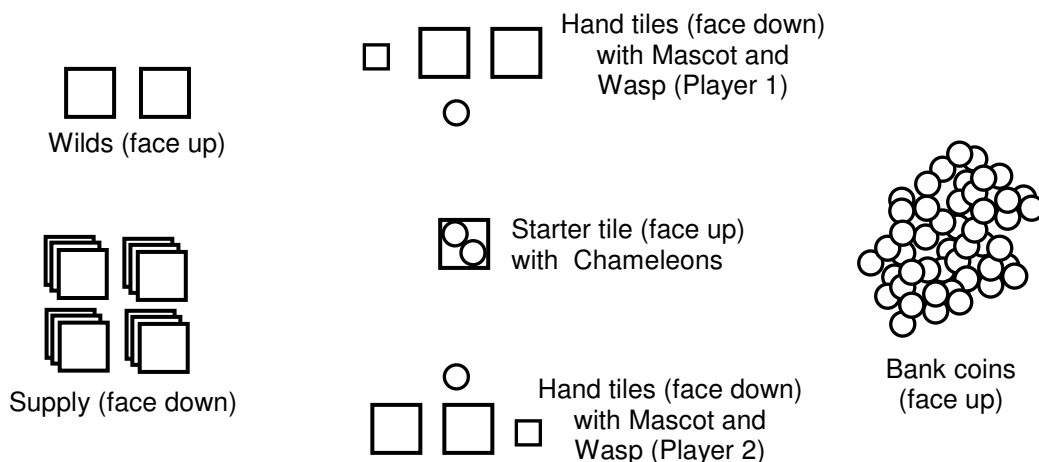


Figure 1. Game setup for two players

Brief Description of the Game

The players jointly build the board, one tile at a time, as the game progresses. Each time a player places a tile that forms a *group* of three or four like-colored tiles, that player receives points, with the quantity depending on the group configuration and on chameleon positions on the board. If a player places a tile adjacent to a wasp, he loses points to the wasp's owner. The player with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Play

Choose a starting player. Play order goes clockwise around the table.

Up to four actions can occur during a player's turn:

- a) Add a tile to the board **or** move your chameleon (**must** do one or the other)
- b) **Optionally** move your wasp if allowed
- c) Score points and/or pay costs as appropriate
- d) Replenish hand to 2 tiles if necessary

When more than one action occurs, they must take place in the order listed above. No action may be done more than once per turn.

a) Add Tile or Move Chameleon

When adding a tile to the board, a player may either pick up one of the tiles in the wilds and add it to the board or may remove a tile from his hand and add it to the board. If the latter, he **must** then place his remaining hand tile in the wilds. When a tile is added to the board it must be placed adjacent to a tile or tiles already on the board. It may be placed either orthogonally adjacent (the tiles touch along the length of a side, i.e., they share a side) or diagonally adjacent (the tiles touch only at a corner).

Note: Players may look at their own hand tiles at any time.

A tile may not be placed in a position that results in the board becoming more than 7 tiles long or 7 tiles wide, i.e., at any time during the game the board must fit within an imaginary 7 tile by 7 tile square.

A player may move his chameleon any number of spaces orthogonally (like a chess rook) as long as all the spaces it passes over contain tiles and it ends its move on a tile. Moves are **not** blocked by other chameleons or by wasps. There is no restriction on how many chameleons may be setting on a tile, and it is OK for chameleons and wasps to share tiles as well. A player may not move his chameleon on the first move of the game because there are no other tiles to move it to.

Chameleons are used to change tile colors for their owners. A chameleon converts any tile it is setting on into a "wild card" color-wise, **for its owner**. The player may consider the tile to be any color he wishes, but only so long as his chameleon is setting on it. For all other players the tile is still its original color. When more than one chameleon is setting on the same tile, those particular chameleons temporarily lose their powers of color conversion and the tile they are both setting on is considered to be **colorless** for all players (when they are moved apart and are no longer sharing a tile, they regain their powers, and the tile is no longer colorless). Colorless tiles can never be part of a group. Although chameleons can change tile colors, they cannot change tile numbers.

Chameleons may *eat* wasps of other players. When a chameleon moves onto a tile containing another player's wasp, it has the **option** of eating the wasp. The wasp is removed from the board and given back to its owner. A chameleon that does not move during a turn may not eat a wasp that turn, even if they are both on the same tile.

b) Move Wasp

When (and only when) a player adds a tile to the board in a position that is **not** orthogonally adjacent to (doesn't share a side with) any other **like-colored** tile, he has the option to immediately move his wasp (his die) onto that tile. Near the beginning of the game, this means moving his wasp into the game for the first time. Later in the game it means moving his wasp from the tile it was last placed on or, re-entering it into the game if it was previously eaten. Wasps are always oriented with their suit icons on the top face, for easy identification.

c) Scoring Points and paying Costs

Scoring points and paying costs can *only occur during turns in which a tile is added to the board*. Movement of chameleons or wasps never directly results in a score or a cost.

Points are scored when a group of three like-colored tiles is formed **as a result of adding a tile to the board**. Points are also scored when a group of three like-colored tiles is expanded to a group of four, as a result of adding a tile to the board. Each tile in a group must be orthogonally adjacent to (share a side with) at least one other tile in the group. The basic points score for either size group is equal to the highest number tile in the group (aces are 1's and nulls are 0's).

If the group contains one or more ace tiles, the score is doubled. If one or more **other players'** chameleons rest on tiles within the group, the score is doubled. A group fulfilling both conditions scores four times the basic score.

note: There is no relationship between player color and group color. Any player can score points for groups of any color.

One of the three or four tiles in a group may be a tile of any color if it holds the scoring player's chameleon (because the chameleon converts the tile to the matching color for the group if the player wishes, as described in section **a**). Similarly, if there were a group of four like-colored tiles, a player could move his chameleon onto one of the four tiles and convert it to a different color, resulting in the group now being effectively a group of three from his point of view. On a future turn he could then add another tile to the group, bringing it back to four tiles from his point of view and score points. This option would not be open to other players, for whom the group already contained four tiles. A tile that holds more than one chameleon cannot be considered part of a group because it is colorless, as explained in section **a**).

note: When a player forms a scoring group of three like-colored tiles that includes a color-converted tile through the use of his chameleon, this group does not yet exist for the other players; from their points of view, there are still only two like-colored tiles.

example: An orange-4 tile is setting next to a blue-5 tile. The player's chameleon is setting on the blue-5. When his turn arrives he places an orange-2 next to the blue-5. The player's chameleon converts the blue-5 into an orange-5 for him, and he scores 5 points for the group: orange-4, orange-5, orange-2. Note that for other players the 5 tile remains blue. For the chameleon's

owner though, the tile can be any color he wishes, during this turn and any future turn, provided his chameleon remains setting on it.

example: An orange-4 tile is setting next to a blue-5 tile. Player A uses his turn to move his chameleon onto the blue-5 (player A has an orange-2 in his hand and plans to place it next to the blue-5 next turn, making a scoring group of three orange with the help of his chameleon). Player B takes his turn next and is able to move his own chameleon onto the blue-5 tile as well, so now that tile is holding two chameleons. Because of this, both chameleons lose their powers and the tile they are on becomes *colorless*. Player B has spoiled player A's plans.

example: A red-2 tile is setting next to a red-3 tile and a player adds a red-ace tile next to the red-2, forming a group of three red tiles. The red-2 holds another player's chameleon. The basic score for this group is 3 points because the highest numbered tile in the group is a 3. The inclusion of an ace tile doubles the score to 6 and the other player's chameleon doubles it again to a total of 12 points for the player who formed the group. He collects 12 points worth of coins from the bank. Note that if there were two tiles, each holding another players' chameleon, within the group, instead of just one, the score would still be 12 points.

Bonus points are awarded for introducing a new color onto the board. At the start of the game there is just one tile color on the board: that of the starter tile. The player who first introduces a tile of a second color immediately receives 2 points from the bank. The player who first introduces a third color receives 3 points etc., with the player who first adds a tile of the eighth color receiving a bonus of 8 points.

When a player places a tile that enlarges a like-colored group of tiles to five or more, he must **pay** a cost of 8 points back to the bank. Note that one of the five tiles would never be one that held the player's chameleon because that tile could always be considered by the player to be of a color different from that of the group. When a player moves his chameleon **off of** a group of five like-colored tiles (which, from his point of view, could have been considered a group of four, since his chameleon converted one to a different color as just explained), he does **not** pay 8 points for creating a group of five from his point of view. This is because scoring points or paying costs can only occur as a result of adding a tile to the board.

When a player places a tile that is orthogonally adjacent to a tile holding **another player's** wasp, he must pay **that player** 4 points.

note: Moves of the type described, that cost points, can sometimes be worthwhile if they also result in a sufficient offsetting points gain, or set a player up for future gains. Late in the game when there are few open spaces remaining within the 7x7 board outline, players may be forced to place a tile in a position that costs points. Astute players will anticipate such circumstances and plan accordingly.

When a player's turn involves both scoring and paying, the scoring is calculated first, and points just scored may then be used for payment on the same turn if necessary. If a player cannot pay his costs at the end of his turn, he is out of the game.

d) Replenish hand

If, at the end of a player's turn, his hand is empty, he draws from the supply to replenish his hand to two. If there is only one tile in the supply, he takes just that one. If there are no tiles in the supply, the player does not replenish his hand.

End Game

When the tile supply runs out, the game continues, but **players may no longer move their chameleons**. Players now **must** add a tile to the board each turn. When a player's turn comes and he has no tiles to play because the wilds and his hand are both empty, he loses his turn and play passes to the next player. Play continues until all remaining tiles, in the wilds and in any player's hand, have been added to the board. The player with highest points score at this time wins the game.