Title: Pawns Crossing
Version Number: 1.0
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Number of Players: 2 - 4
Approximate Length of Game: 30 min.
Equipment Needed: 1 piecepack, 1 set of double-six dominoes
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PAWNS CROSSING

A 2 To 4 Player Game Using A Piecepack And A Set Of Double-Six Dominoes

INTRODUCTION

Pawns Crossing is an abstract game that combines a requirement for tactical skill with a modest luck element. Players race to move tokens to their destinations over a tile and domino board. The game incorporates three separate movement mechanics which players must choose between at the beginning of each turn: a) Tokens move along the surfaces of dominoes and tiles, b) pawns move between holes that exist in the board at domino intersections, c) The rows and columns of the board shift. A complete game typically takes 20-40 minutes. The game may be enjoyed by two to four players but a 2-player game feels different from a 4-player game. As with many multi-player abstracts, the 2-player version is more strategic.

REQUIRED COMPONENTS

1 set of standard size double-six dominoes.

1 piecepack, of which the following is required:

- The 16 tiles numbered ace through 4.

- The 4 pawns.

- The 4 dice.

- 16 tokens (the 2, 3, 4, and null(blank) of each color).

SETUP

Remove the 6/6, the 6/5, and the 6/4 dominoes. These will not be used in the game. Turn the remaining dominoes face down and shuffle them. Turn the ace through 4 piecepack tiles suit side down and shuffle them. Form a 4X4 array with the tiles, leaving about one inch between each tile and its neighbors. Turn the tiles back over one at a time so they are all suit side up. One at a time place face down dominoes between all adjacent tiles, then turn the dominoes over. The idea is to end up with a board having rows and columns that alternate between tiles and dominoes, and in which the distribution of numbers and colors on the tiles is random, as is the distribution of numbers on the dominoes. There should be one domino left over. This is called the Pusher. It is turned face-up and placed near the board.

In a 2-player game one player is red and black while the other is blue and green. In a three or four player game each player uses only a single color.

Place the tokens on the ace tile of their color, suit side up. For a 2-player game the null tokens are not used. Each player's ace tile should have three tokens on it in a 2-player game, or four tokens on it in a 3 or 4-player game. Note: in a 3-player game the players are red, green, and blue, and the black tokens are not used so there will be no tokens on the black ace at the beginning of a 3-player game.

Each player keeps his or her dice and pawns handy near the board. In a 2-player game one player takes the red and black dice and pawns, and the other player takes the blue and green. In three and four player games each player takes only the die and pawn of their color. Figure 1 shows a typical board layout at the beginning of a 2-player game.
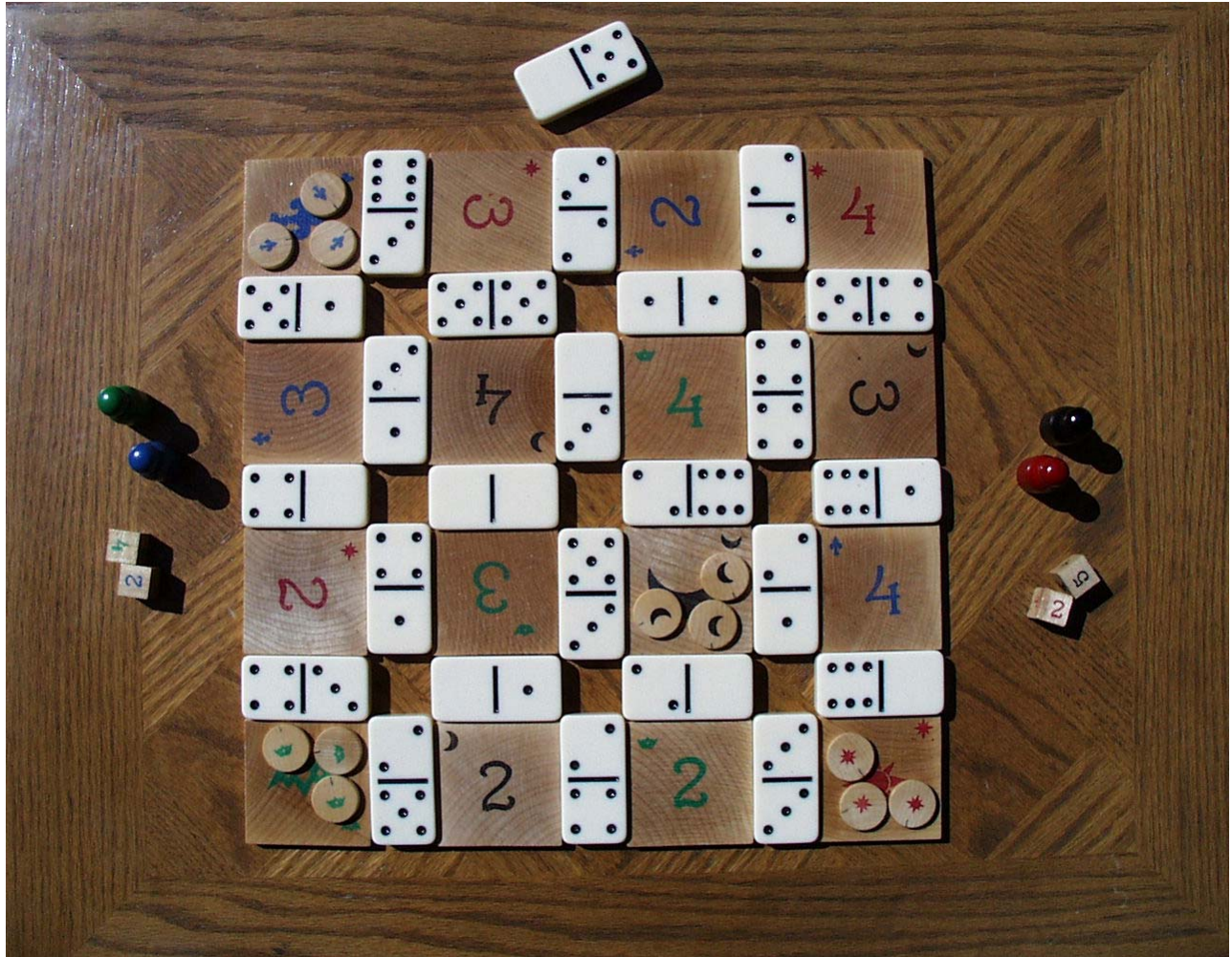
Fig. 1

OBJECT OF THE GAME

The object of the game is to move all your tokens onto their matching tiles (the number and color of the token matches the number and color of the tile). For example, move the red/2 token to the red/2 tile, move the red/3 token to the red/3 tile, etc. The null tokens used in 3 and 4-player games are like wild cards; their destination tile must still match in color but the tokens may be moved onto any of a player's three destination tiles (2, 3, or 4). The first player to move all of their tokens to their destination tiles wins the game.

MOVEMENT MECHANICS

Tokens:

Tokens move from space to space across the board. Each half-domino is a space. Tiles are also spaces. All spaces are numbered, either with pips in the case of the dominoes, or with numerals or an icon (=1) in the case of the tiles. The maximum number of spaces a token may move during a turn is set by the roll of a die. Unless blocked, a token may move over any number of spaces until it comes to a space having a number equal to or higher than the die roll. It may not go past that space. It may stop ON the space. A token may always be moved fewer than the maximum number of spaces allowed. On the dice, aces count as 1's. If a die comes up with a blank face, the token of that color may not be moved at all, not even onto a blank half-domino. Instead, the pawn of that color MUST be moved immediately.

When crossing domino intersections (when crossing over the holes in the board) tokens move from the space on one side of the intersection directly to one of the other three spaces leading away from the intersection. The hole does not count as a space and tokens are allowed to make right-angle turns at intersections, even in the middle of a move.

However a token may not cross, nor turn a corner through, an intersection that is occupied by a pawn of a DIFFERENT color than the token. The movement is blocked. Pawns that are the SAME color as the token are invisible to the token and have no effect on its movement.

Token movement is not blocked by other tokens. A half-domino with a token on it is considered to have a value of zero (like a blank half-domino), so other tokens may always pass over it. However, a token may not stop on top of another token on a domino. Any number of tokens may share a tile however with no effect on each other. They are then positioned side-by-side so all can be seen. Think of the dominoes as roads where passing is allowed, and the tiles as broad junctions with plenty of space for passing or parking.

When a token passes from a tile onto an adjacent half-domino or from a half-domino onto an adjacent tile, this is called a transition. A token may not make more than one transition per move. A transition may be made at the beginning of a movement (when moving off a tile and onto a domino) or at the end of a movement (when moving onto a tile). A transition from tile to domino may be followed by further movement along dominoes per the die roll as part of a single move. Note that the "one transition per move" rule means that it is never possible to move a token from its starting ace tile to its destination tile in a single move. When moving from a tile onto a domino, either half of the domino may be moved onto, provided it is empty and is allowed by the roll of the die.

At any time during the game a player is allowed to lift up one side of any of their own tokens to check what the number is on the other side without letting the other player(s) see (players will want to keep this information secret).

Pawns:

Pawns reside in the holes in the board at the domino intersections. A pawn movement consists of simply moving the pawn directly to any open hole. A hole is open if it is not occupied by a pawn. A forced pawn movement is triggered whenever a player rolls a blank face on a die. The pawn MUST then move to a different location.

Near the end of the game, as soon as any player has only one token remaining on the board, pawn movement is prohibited for all players for the rest of the game unless forced (by rolling a blank face on a die). If a forced movement does occur at this stage of the game, the pawn is moved OFF the board and stays off the board for the remainder of the game.

Sliding:

A sliding movement consists of taking the pusher (see setup) domino and using it to gently push on any of the twelve outside tiles of the board until another tile AND domino get pushed out of the opposite side of the board. The pushed out tile is now picked up and carefully inserted into the hole left on the other side. The pushed out domino is left where it is, against the side of the board, adjacent to a tile. It becomes the new pusher domino. Any tokens on this domino or on any other moved domino or tile move along with that domino or tile. The next time a sliding move is made on a row or column the new pusher domino is repositioned as required to do the pushing. If there is a token setting on the pusher at that time, it stays on the pusher during the operation. Note that during a token movement it is allowable to move from a tile onto the adjacent Pusher domino (i.e., after the first sliding movement of the game the two halves of the Pusher constitute legal spaces on the board that tokens may be moved onto and off of).

After a player slides a row or column, the next player is not allowed to slide the same row or column back to its former configuration (i.e., you may not simply un-do the previous player's move). There must be at least one turn (token move, pawn move, or other sliding move) in between.

TURN SEQUENCE AND PLAY

To begin the game all players roll their dice to determine starting order. Resolve ties by re-rolling. Note that in the case of a 2-player game each player will be rolling two dice, which are then summed. The player with the highest roll places their pawn(s) on the board, in the hole(s) of their choice. Then the player with the second highest roll places their pawn(s) and so on until all pawns have been placed. The player who placed their pawn(s) last now takes the first regular turn of the game.

A regular turn consists of doing exactly ONE of the following:

*Roll your die and move a token (or in the case of a 2-player game roll both of your dice and then move a token of each of your colors, or optionally move just one token). If a die comes up showing a blank face, no token of that color is moved. Instead the pawn of that color MUST be moved.

*Move a pawn (or in the case of a 2-player game move one or both of your pawns).

*Slide one of the board rows or columns.

When a token reaches it's matching destination tile the player owning it announces this. It is then turned over so it can be plainly seen that the token number and tile number match, or that the token is a null token. The token is then removed from the board. If the token and tile don't match, the token is immediately returned to the ace tile of its color. Note: Tokens may pass over or rest on any tile. It is only when a player declares that the token has reached its destination that it must be revealed before being removed from the board.

As soon as any player has only one token remaining on the board the rules for pawn movement change for all players. For the remainder of the game pawns may not be moved unless forced, and if a pawn is forced to move at this stage of the game it must move off the board permanently.

WINNING

As soon as one player moves their last token to its matching destination tile and off the board the game is over and that player wins.

SUGGESTED VARIATION FOR 2-PLAYER GAMES

Sometimes the tile distribution at the beginning of the game can give either red/black or blue/green a noticeable advantage because the distances between the aces and 2's, 3's, and 4's for one color pair are significantly shorter than for the other. One way to fix this is to measure the sum of the distances (counting just "number of tiles away" and ignoring the dominoes) for each color before the game starts. Then, instead of one player taking red and black and the other player taking blue and green, one player takes the colors with the longest and shortest path totals and the other player takes the two remaining colors. Although it's a bit more bothersome than the standard rules, this will always result in a fair game. In games with more than two players the tile distribution is not as much of a problem because more players have a chance to change the board through sliding before any player's turn comes around again.