Rules of the Game

Kamisado

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Number of players : 2
Age Range : 10 to adult
Game Duration : 20-30 minutes (Single Round)
: 60-90 minutes (Standard Match)
: 2 to 3 hours (Long Match)
: 3 to 5 hours (Marathon Match)

Equipment

A playing board, divided into 64 squares in eight different colours.

The playing board is double-sided, one side being as shown below, while the reverse side has Chinese characters marked on each square. This has been done to assist those suffering from colour blindness, and also for those players who just think it looks better with the Chinese characters added! So you can choose whichever side of the board you like. The game is just the same, but the 'look' is different!

Sixteen octagonal 'dragon tower' playing pieces. Of these, eight towers are white, while the other eight are black.

22 clear plastic octagonal 'Dragon's Tooth' tokens.

Three rulebooks, one in English and the others in German and French.

Preparation

Place the board between the two players. The row nearest to each player is known as that player's *'home row'*. If the board has been placed correctly, each player will have an orange square at the right-hand end of his/her home row (and a brown square at the left-hand end of his/her home row).

Note: The game works equally well with the board the other way around (with an orange square on the left and a brown square on the right). However, it has been adopted as a convention that orange should be on the right, and none of the example moves (or complete recorded matches) described later in this rulebook will work correctly if you place the board the other way round.

The more experienced player takes the white towers, while the other player takes the black towers. In any match, the player who takes the white towers for the first round will continue to use the white towers for the entire match, while his/her opponent will retain the black towers throughout the match.

Within each set (black and white) each tower is marked with a different symbol on the top. These symbols (which match those that appear on the 'Chinese' side of the board) actually mean Brown, Green, Red, Yellow, Pink, Purple, Blue and Orange, and each symbol is painted in the corresponding colour. So each player will now have one tower marked with each of the following symbols:

Brown Green Red Yellow Pink Purple Blue Orange

These towers are referred to throughout the rest of this rulebook as 'Dragon Towers'. The dragon towers are identified throughout the rulebook by the colour of the tower (white or black) together with the colour of the symbol marked on the top. So, for example, the white tower with the red symbol on the top will be referred to as 'White's red tower', while the black tower with the yellow symbol will be called 'Black's yellow tower'.

Both players now place all their dragon towers on their own 'home row'. For the initial round, each dragon tower is placed so that the colour of the symbol on top of the tower matches the colour of the square it is placed on. So the tower marked with the brown symbol is placed on the brown square, the tower marked with the green symbol is placed on the green square etc., etc. The start position for the initial round is shown below:

For subsequent rounds, the starting positions of the towers vary, and are determined by the relative positions of each player's towers at the end of the previous round. This will be dealt with later in the rules.

Object of the Game

The game is played in 'rounds'. Within each round, the object is to reach your opponent's 'home row' with one of your dragon towers (i.e. you must place one of your towers on one of the squares in your opponent's home row). The player who manages to do this first scores one point (in later rounds, two, four or even eight points may be scored for winning a round - please see further on in the rules).
Before you start playing, decide which type of match you would like to play. You can choose from the following options:

Single Round (where the first player to score 1 point is the winner)
Standard Match (where the first player to score a total of 3 points is the winner)
Long Match (where the first player to score a total of 7 points is the winner)
Marathon Match (where the first player to score a total of 15 points is the winner)

To see the estimated duration for each of the types of match listed above, please refer to the beginning of these rules.

Special Features

The type of match you play will determine how many special features of Kamisado you will encounter.
A Single Round match, which ends as soon as one of the players has scored one point, involves only the basic rules of Kamisado, and you only need to read the section below on 'Method of Play (Single Round)' before you can start playing.

There are also separate sections below to describe each of the longer match formats (Standard, Long and Marathon). These sections describe the additional special features which are associated with each match type, such as 'Sumo' dragon towers, and the enhanced scoring system which is used in the longer matches and the method used to set up the towers at the beginning of each new round.

Please note: Having the rules structured in this way means that you only have to read the rules up to and including the section describing the match format that you wish to play.

Method of Play (Single Round)

During each round, the players take turns to move a dragon tower, each attempting to be the first to place a dragon tower on a square within their opponent's home row.

The ways in which the dragon towers can be moved are governed by the rules set out below. This page can be used as a quick reference for all the rules for the basic game. However, in the pages that follow, fuller descriptions of these rules (and examples of their use) are provided. The diagrams that are referred to within these descriptions are to be found in the booklet 'Example Moves', supplied with this game:

Which Tower?

Rules determining which tower a player moves:

Rule T1: For the first move only in any round, the player making this move can select any of his/her eight dragon towers as the one to be moved.
Rule T2: For all subsequent moves in that round (i.e. on any move except the first), each player must move the dragon tower that matches the colour of the square on which their opponent's previous move finished.
Please note that this is a very important rule and it is vital that you understand it fully before you attempt to play Kamisado!

Valid Moves?

Rules determining how that tower can be moved:

Rule M1: A tower must be moved in a straight line, either directly forwards or diagonally forwards. No sideways or backwards moves are EVER allowed, except backwards moves made as a result of a 'Sumo push' (see later – not applicable to a Single Round match).
Rule M2: A tower can be moved any number of squares, but may not pass through any square that already contains a tower (either belonging to the player making the move, or to his/her opponent). A tower can even be moved directly from a square in a player's own home row to an empty space in his/her opponent's home row, provided that this move is in a straight line and there are no towers on any of the squares the tower has to pass through.
Rule M3: A tower can only be moved to a square that was previously empty (i.e. no two towers may ever occupy the same space).
Rule M4: A tower is allowed to move diagonally between two dragon towers that occupy squares that touch corner-to-corner.
Rule M5: A tower must be moved at least one square if it is at all possible to do so.
Rule M6: If it is impossible to move the required tower in any way (i.e. if it is completely blocked from moving forwards or diagonally forwards), the player whose turn it is to move that tower has to miss that turn, and his/her opponent moves again immediately. For further detail see below.
Rule M7: The round finishes as soon as either player succeeds in moving one tower to any square within their opponent's 'home row'. That player has now 'won' that round.
Rule M8: It is possible, although extremely unlikely, to get a situation where both players have towers which are completely blocked so that they cannot be moved, and for these towers to interact to form a 'deadlock' situation where no further towers can be moved at all. In this situation, the player who made the last move prior to the occurrence of the deadlock situation (i.e. the player who 'caused' the deadlock) is considered to have lost the round, and his/her opponent is the winner of that round.

The examples below are provided to help you to understand the 'mechanics' of Kamisado. Reading through these examples should give a clearer picture of how all the rules specified above actually work. While reading these examples, you should refer to the diagrams in the separate booklet 'Example Moves', which is provided with the game.

Opening Moves

In the example opening that follows, Alain is playing against Johan. Alain, being the more experienced player, takes the white dragon towers. As Johan is the less experienced player, he uses the black dragon towers and has the first move of the round. (In the first round of any match, the player using the black dragon towers moves first). In any round, the player that moves first is known as the Challenger. The other player is known as the Defender for that round. The player using the black towers is always the Challenger in the first round of any match. In subsequent rounds, the player who lost the previous round is always the Challenger and takes the first move, while the player who won the previous round is now the Defender.

For his first move, Johan can select any of his eight towers (see **Rule T1** above). Having selected a tower, he

can move this tower any number of spaces directly forwards or diagonally forwards (see **Rule M1**). If Johan chooses to move his pink tower first, then the possible opening moves for this tower are as shown in Figure 1(a). (See the separate booklet 'Example Moves'). Alternatively, if Johan chooses to move his red tower, then the moves available are as shown in Figure 1(b).

After Johan's initial move (which involved him having a choice of tower), players take turns to move their dragon towers. Each player, on any given move, must use the tower whose symbol's colour matches the colour of the square on which his opponent's previous move finished. So if Johan moves his red tower to a blue square, as shown in Figure 2(a), then Alain's first move must be with his blue tower (see **Rule T2**). Once again, this tower may be moved any number of squares in a straight line, either directly forwards or diagonally forwards, provided it does not pass through any squares occupied by other towers belonging to either player (see **Rule M2**). The selection of squares that Alain is allowed to move his blue tower to is shown in Figure 2(b). Remember that moves must finish on an unoccupied square (see **Rule M3**) and that moves can never be backwards or sideways (see **Rule M1**).

If Alain moves his blue tower to the yellow square (shown in Figure 2(c)), then Johan's next move must be with his yellow tower and the moves available to him are shown in Figure 2(d). Figure 2(e) shows Johan's move as being to a purple square, while Figure 2(f) shows all of Alain's possible responses with his purple tower. Figure 2(g) shows Alain moving his purple tower to a green square. Following on from this, Figures 2(h) and 2(i) display all Johan's potential moves and his actual move to an orange square. Figures 2(j) and 2(k) show Alain's options at this point and his actual move (5 spaces forwards to a blue square). Figure 2(l) shows Johan's options with his blue tower on his next turn.

You Must Move if you Can!

A tower must be moved at least one square if it is possible to do so (**Rule M5**). Figures 3(a) to 3(c) illustrate the application of this rule:

Figure 3(a) Helmut has moved his **brown** tower forward two spaces to a **blue** square.
Figure 3(b) Steve must then move his **blue** tower. The only space that he can move this tower to is the **pink** square as shown in this diagram. Steve must make this move. He cannot choose to leave his **blue** tower where it is and 'pass' on this turn. The only time a player misses his/her turn without moving a tower is when there is no possible move for that tower (see the examples in Figures 4(a) to 4(c) and 5(a) to 5(f) below).
Figure 3(c) In this particular example, Helmut can now win the round by moving his **pink** tower three spaces forwards to the **blue** square in Steve's home row.

What Happens if your Tower is Blocked?

A player who finds that the tower he/she is supposed to be moving is completely blocked (i.e. this tower cannot be moved at all, either forwards or diagonally forwards) must forfeit his/her turn (**Rule M6**). Although his/her tower remained on the same spot, it is considered that this dragon tower has made a (zero-length) move that finished on this square. This means that this player's opponent will move again, using the tower whose symbol's colour matches the square on which the blocked player's dragon tower was trapped.

An example of a tower being blocked is illustrated in Figures 4(a) to 4(c). In this example, Chris is using the white towers and Amy is using the black towers:

Figure 4(a) Amy's **brown** tower has just moved forward four spaces to a **green** square.
Figure 4(b) Chris must now move his **green** tower, if possible. However, this tower is completely blocked by Amy's **red** and **yellow** towers and by his own **brown** tower. No movement is possible, so Chris has to forfeit this turn. Note that Chris's tower is trapped on a **yellow** square.
Figure 4(c) Amy takes the next turn, and because Chris's **green** tower was trapped on a **yellow** square, Amy will use her **yellow** tower for this turn. In this particular example, Amy can move her **yellow** tower three spaces forwards onto Chris's 'home row' and win the round (**Rule M7**).

A more complex example can be seen in Figures 5(a) to 5(f), where Vlora has the white towers and Daniel has the black towers:

Figure 5(a) Daniel's **blue** tower has just moved forward five spaces onto a **green** square.
Figure 5(b) Vlora must move her **green** tower, if possible. However, this piece is completely blocked and she has no forward move. Vlora must forfeit her turn. Note that Vlora's **green** tower is trapped on a **yellow** square.
Figure 5(c) Daniel takes the next move, using his **yellow** tower, because Vlora's tower was trapped on a **yellow** square. But Daniel's **yellow** tower is completely blocked as well, so he must also forfeit his turn. Note that his **yellow** tower is trapped on a **blue** square.
Figure 5(d) Vlora now moves her **blue** tower (because that is the colour of square that Daniel was trapped on) forward three squares to a **yellow** square.

Figure 5(e) Daniel's **yellow** tower is still trapped on the same **blue** square, so he has to forfeit his turn again.
Figure 5(f) Viora can now move her **blue** tower diagonally forwards two squares to a space on Daniel's home row to win the round.

Deadlock!

It is possible to get situations where neither player can move any of his/her towers in a sequence of moves that repeat indefinitely (**Rule M8**). These are known as 'Deadlock' situations. When a deadlock situation occurs, the last person to move a tower before the deadlock occurs loses that round! (i.e. the last player to have moved is adjudged to have 'caused' the deadlock – even if they were forced to do so). Deadlock situations are extremely rare, partly because players are careful not to cause them. They can involve a 'perpetually repeating sequence' of two dragon towers (one belonging to each player), or four towers, or six, or more.

Figures 6(a) to 6(e) illustrate a deadlock situation where Wolfgang is using the white towers and Ralf is using the black towers:

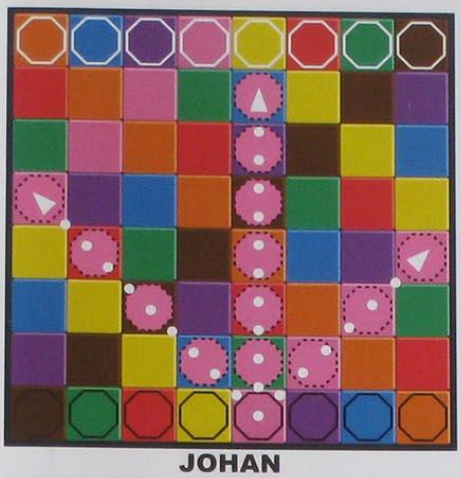
Figure 6(a) Wolfgang's **blue** tower has just moved forward one space to a **green** square.
Figure 6(b) Ralf must now move his **green** tower. There is only one space he can move it to, the **red** one diagonally to the right. To comply with **Rule M5**, he must move at least one space, if it is possible to do so. So his is forced to move to this **red** square.
Figure 6(c) Wolfgang must now move his **red** tower, but this tower is completely blocked by his own **brown** tower and by Ralf's **pink** and **purple** towers. So he must forfeit his turn. Note that his **red** tower is trapped on a **green** square.
Figure 6(d) It is now Ralf's move again immediately, with his **green** tower. His **green** tower is also blocked, by his own **red** tower and by Wolfgang's **yellow** and **orange** towers. He is trapped on a **red** square.
Figure 6(e) Once again, Wolfgang needs to move his **red** tower but it is still blocked and trapped on a **green** square. It is easy to see that we now have a 'Deadlock' situation where the sequence of moves repeats indefinitely, but neither player is able to move. Because Ralf was the last player to actually move a tower, he is considered to have 'caused' the deadlock, and so he loses the round and Wolfgang is the winner.

The Winner!

When you are playing up to one point (Single Round), the game is over as soon as one player moves a dragon tower to his/her opponent's 'home row'. This player will be the winner.

If you wish, you can play a series of single-round games (starting each time with each tower on the square that matches it). Score one point for each game, and take turns to play the first move.

Figure 1(a) ALAIN



JOHAN

Figure 1(b) ALAIN

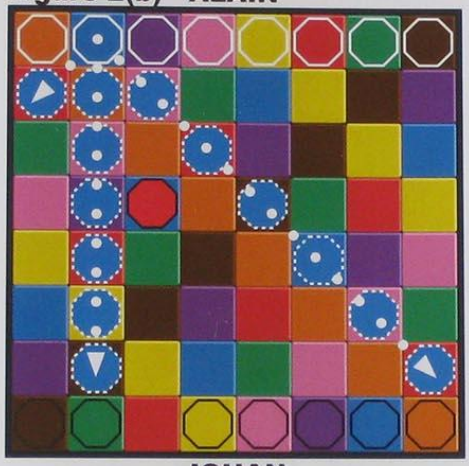
JOHAN

Figure 2(a) ALAIN

JOHAN

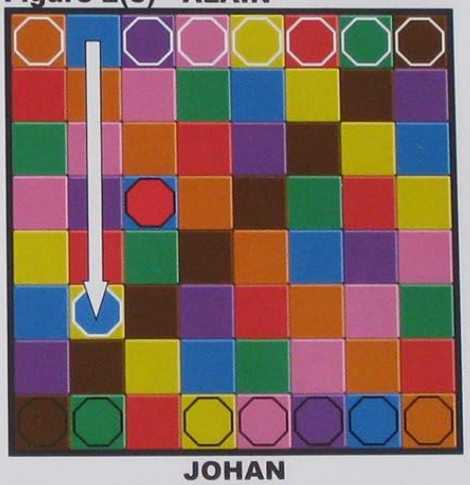
EXAMPLE MOVES

Figure 2(b) ALAIN



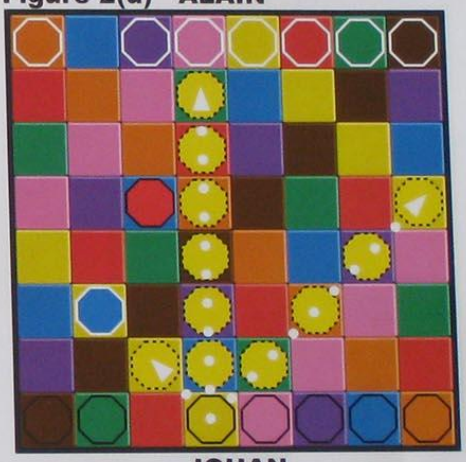
JOHAN

Figure 2(c) ALAIN



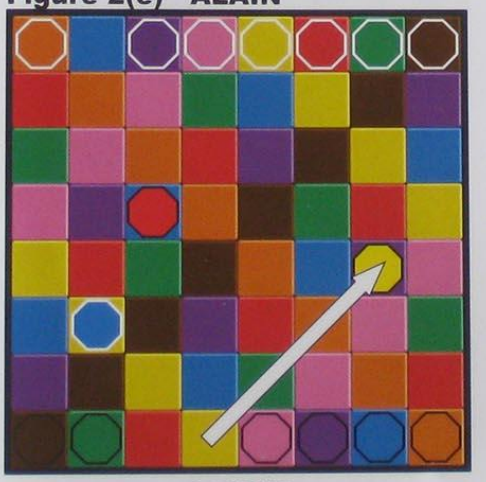
JOHAN

Figure 2(d) ALAIN



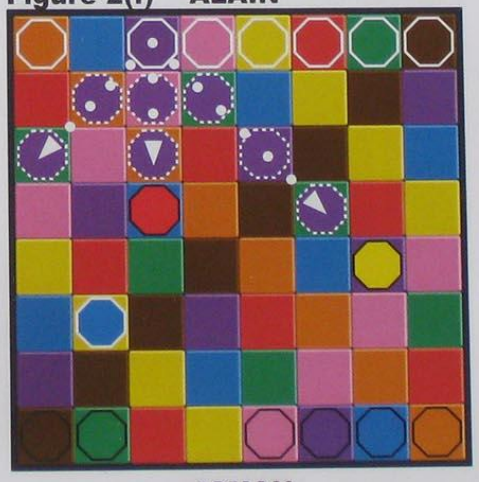
JOHAN

Figure 2(e) ALAIN



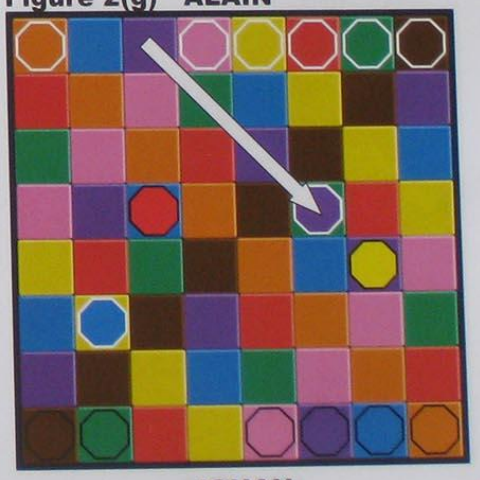
JOHAN

Figure 2(f) ALAIN



JOHAN

Figure 2(g) ALAIN



JOHAN

EXAMPLE MOVES

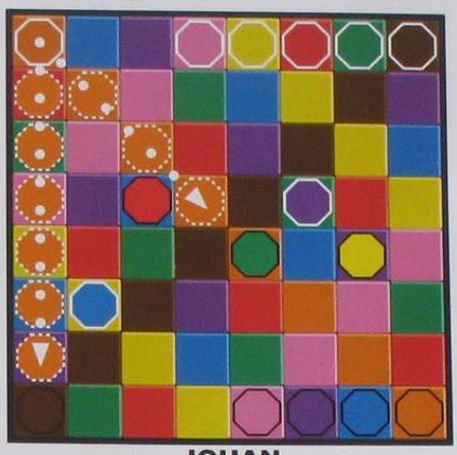
Figure 2(h) ALAIN

JOHAN

Figure 2(i) ALAIN

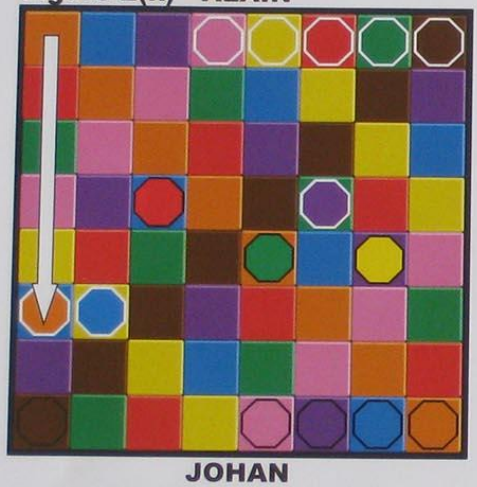
JOHAN

Figure 2(j) ALAIN



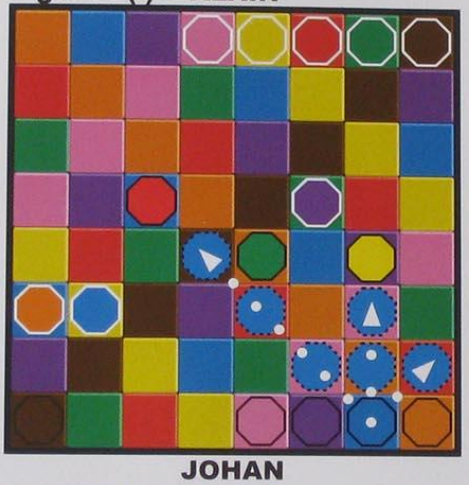
JOHAN

Figure 2(k) ALAIN



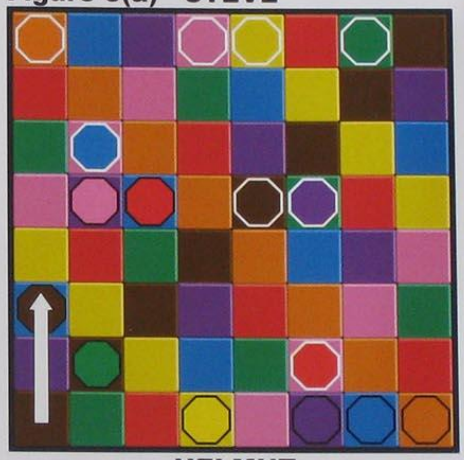
JOHAN

Figure 2(l) ALAIN



JOHAN

Figure 3(a) STEVE



HELMUT

Figure 3(b) STEVE

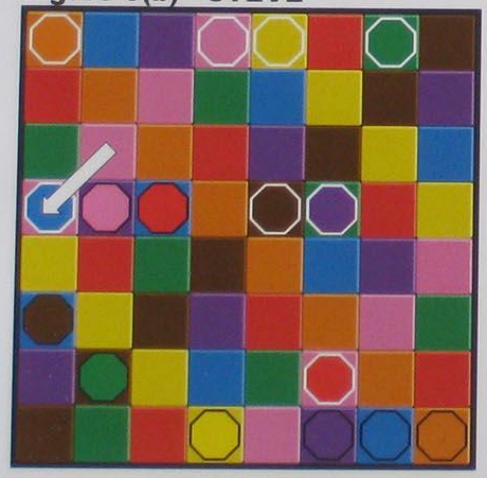


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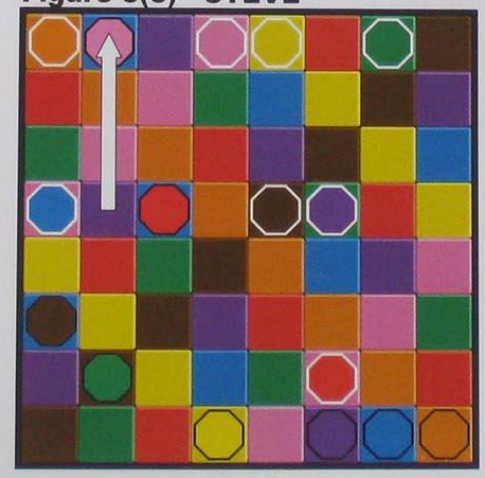
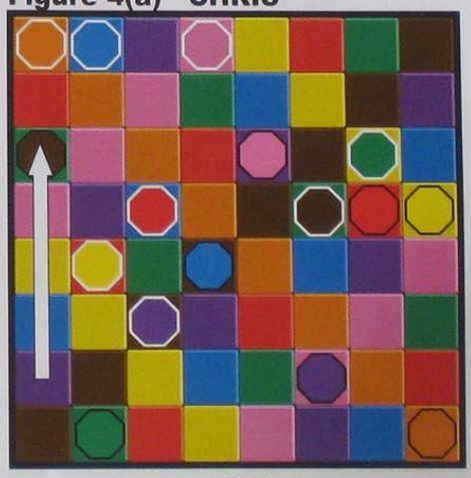
Figure 3(c) STEVE



HELMUT

Figure 4(a) CHRIS



AMY

Figure 4(b) CHRIS

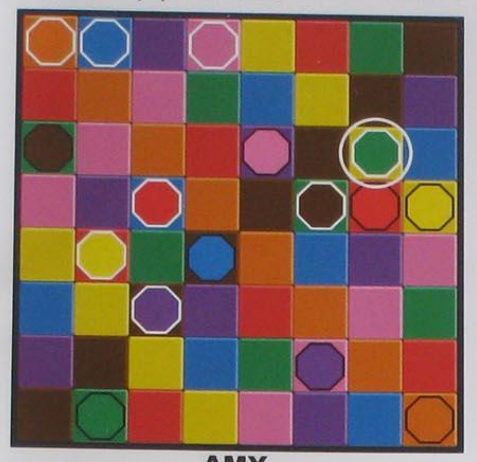


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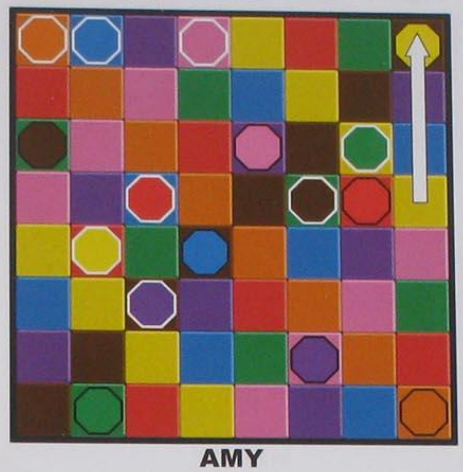
Figure 4(c) CHRIS

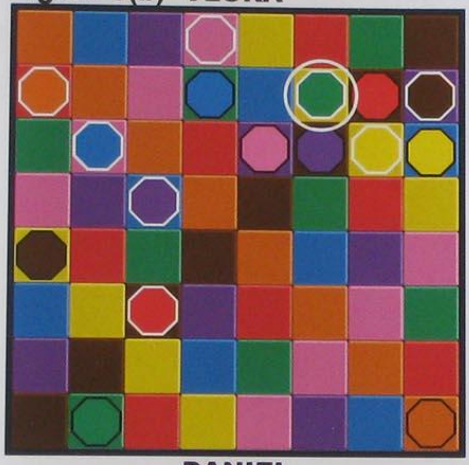


AMY

Figure 5(a) VLORA

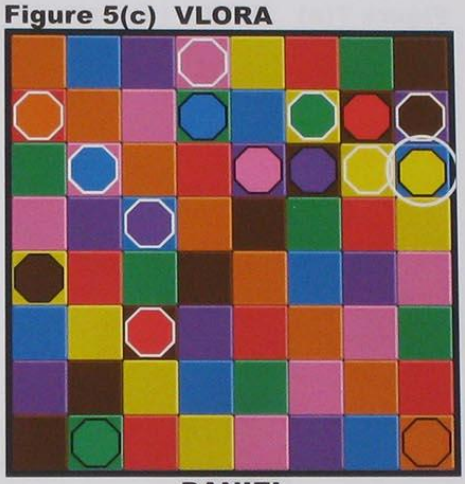
DANIEL

Figure 5(b) VLORA



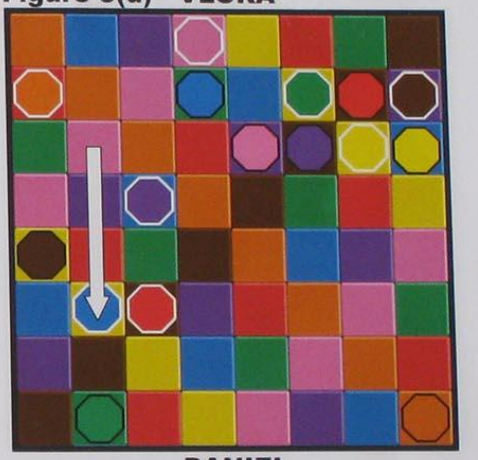
DANIEL

Figure 5(c) VLORA



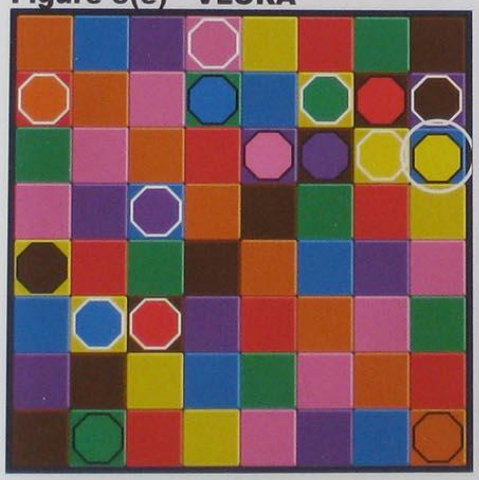
DANIEL

Figure 5(d) VLORA



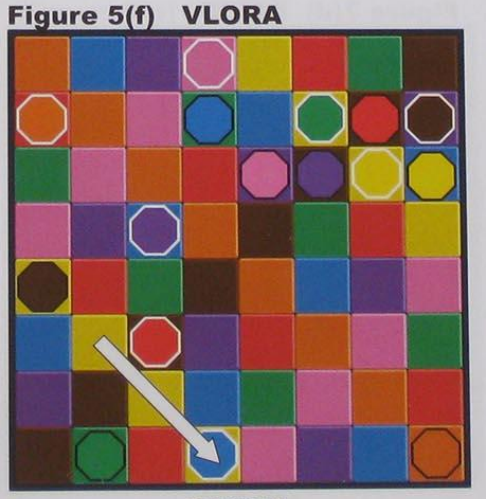
DANIEL

Figure 5(e) VLORA



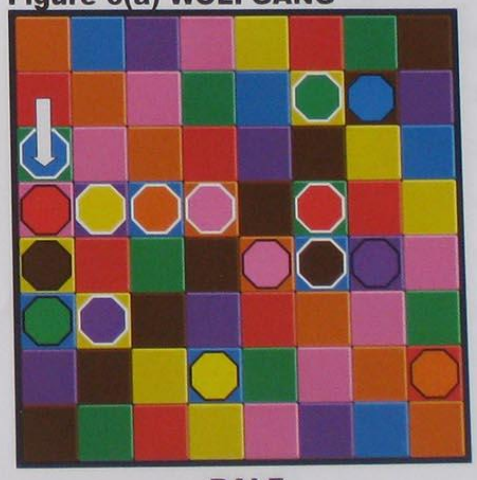
DANIEL

Figure 5(f) VLORA



DANIEL

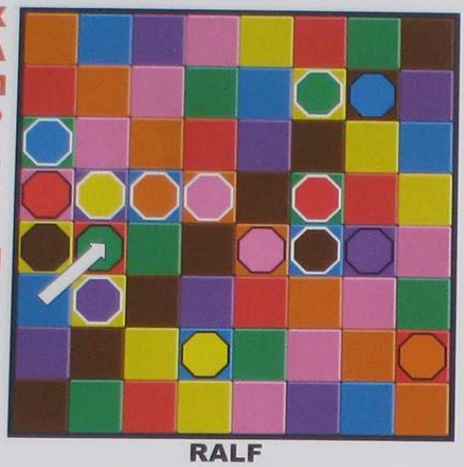
Figure 6(a) WOLFGANG



RALF

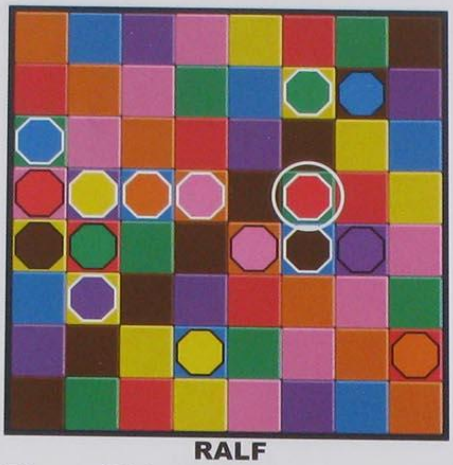
EXAMPLE MOVES

Figure 6(b) WOLFGANG



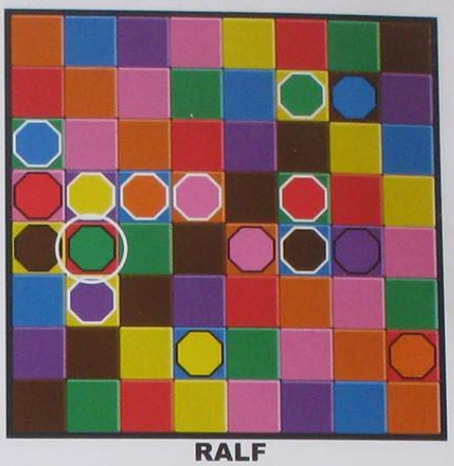
RALF

Figure 6(c) WOLFGANG



RALF

Figure 6(d) WOLFGANG



RALF

Figure 6(e) WOLFGANG

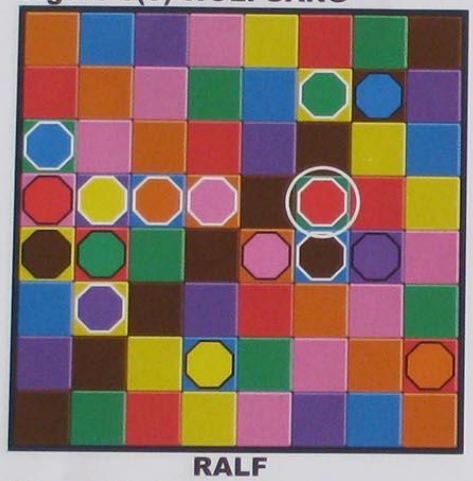


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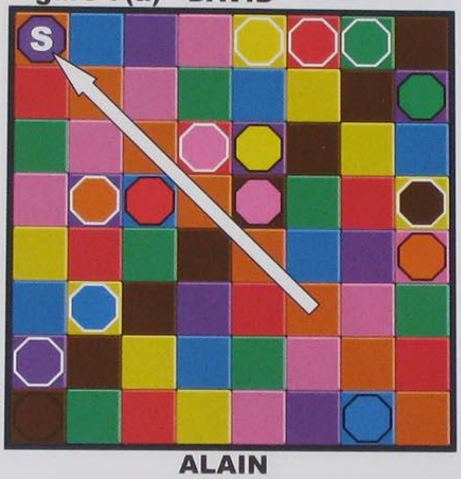
Figure 7(a) DAVID



ALAIN

Figure 7(b) DAVID

ALAIN

Figure 7(c) DAVID

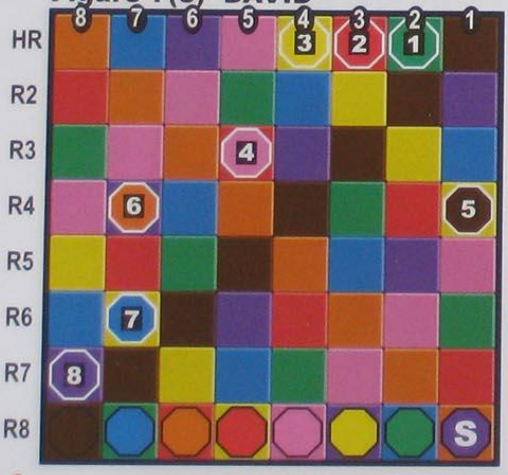


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Figure 7(d) DAVID

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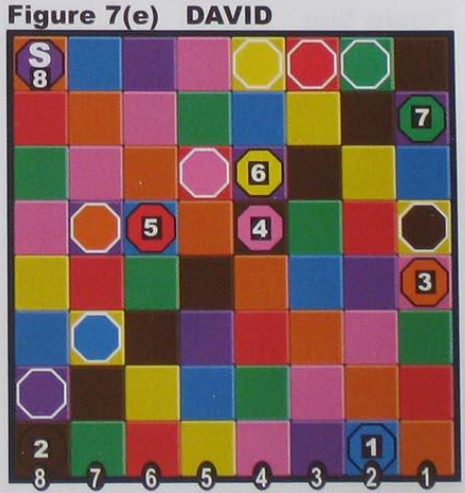

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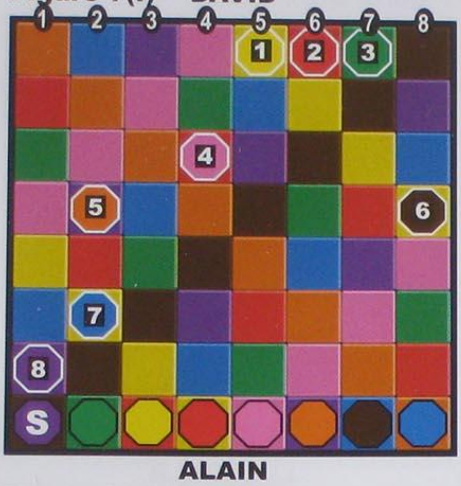

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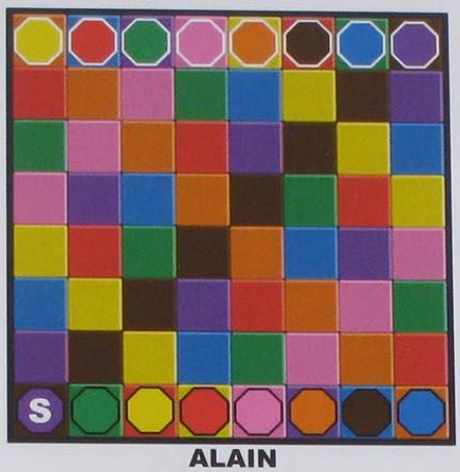

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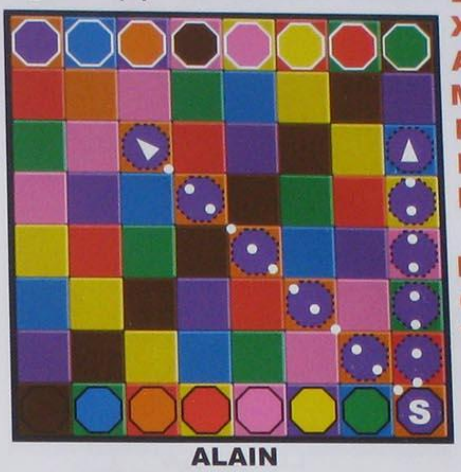
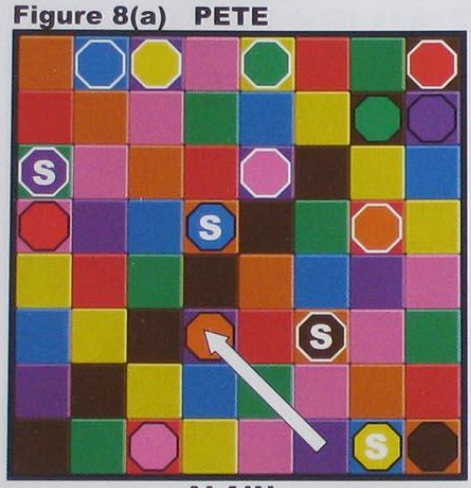


ALAIN

Figure 8(a) PETE



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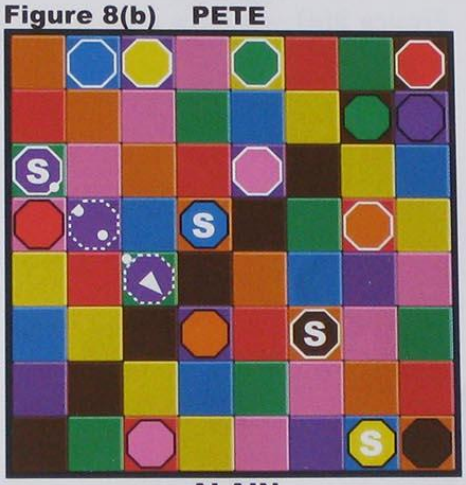

ALAIN

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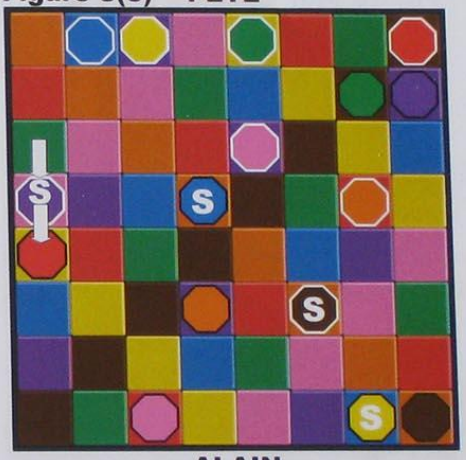

ALAIN

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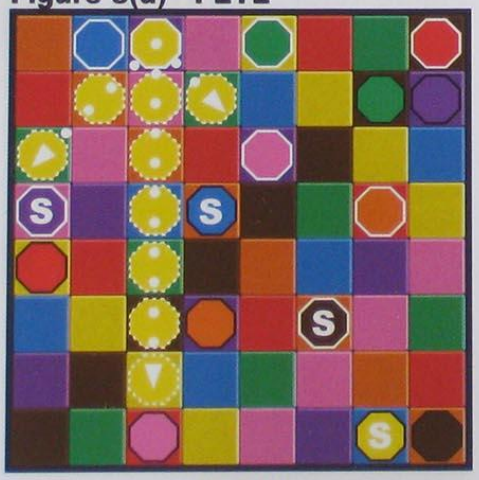

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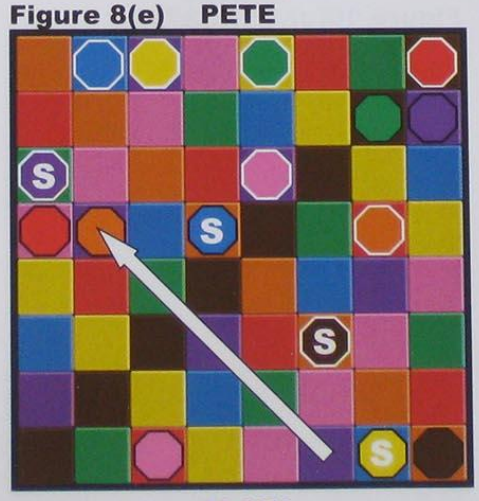

ALAIN

Figure 8(f) PETE

ALAIN