

Absolute Backgammon for the iPad Manual

Version 2.0

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Game Design Philosophy

Absolute Backgammon has been designed with the following in mind:

- make it as real as possible
- make it as easy to use as possible
- make it enjoyable to play
- make it attractive to the eye
- let the player play the game the way they want rather than force them to adapt.
- make it a challenge for the experienced players as well as enjoyable for the novice
- make it a good learning tool for all players
- give the player the options and features they desire
- do all of the above while keeping the interface out of your face

The game has many options and features to accomplish all of that. Most will be explained in the next few pages.

Game Layout

When the game first starts a backgammon game is setup and the main menu is displayed. Select which type of play you want.

You have the light piece colors and move your pieces in a clockwise direction from the top left to the bottom left (from the 24 row to the 1 row).

Your bear-off tray is on the bottom left.

Your dice are on the bottom right.

If you are using the cube, it will be between the 2 sets of dice.

Next to each set of dice, you will see a small green light. When your light is on it is your turn to roll the dice.

On the top and bottom of the board you will see the row numbers. You move from the 24 row to the 1 row.

Helpful game messages are displayed at the top middle of the board.

On the top right, you will see a set of 5 icons. From the topmost going down:

- the 1st icon displays the basic play instructions
- the 2nd icon displays the preferences/settings that you can change
- the 3rd icon is the Actions icon. Touching it brings up a menu that allows you to do several things such as start a new game or save a game, etc
- the 4th icon (a light bulb) gives advice on the cube and suggestions for moving the pieces
- the 5th icon is used to undo all of the moves you have made on your turn

How to Play a Game

Direction of Play and Piece Color - at the start of the game, in one of the upper corners of the board, you will see 2 pieces on the 24 row. This is your piece color. If the 2 pieces are in the left corner, you move clockwise - bearing off from the bottom left. If the 2 pieces are on the right side, you move counter clockwise and bearoff from the bottom right.

Your tray is on the bottom left if you are moving clockwise. It is on the bottom right if you are moving counter clockwise. It is next to the 1 row, if you have the row numbers displayed.

Your dice are always on the right side of the board.

There are 3 ways to **roll the dice**:

- touch your dice
- touch the right half of the playing area
- touch in your tray (can't use this method when playing with another person)

Move a piece by touching one of your pieces then dragging it to the new row.

At the end of the game when you are bearing off pieces into your tray, you can touch your tray to move a piece that requires the same distance to bear-off as either of the dice or both. It also works for dice that are greater than the farthest out piece.

Finish your turn - play is passed automatically to your opponent when you have finished all of your moves (unless you can't use all of your dice - see below). In settings, you can select "Touch Your Dice To End Your Turn" to not have play passed automatically.

Double your opponent by sliding the Cube to the other side of the board.

Bear-off a piece by putting it in your tray

De-select a piece by moving it back to the row you took it from (before releasing it) or release it anywhere that is not over a row.

Can't use both dice - touch the dice to continue

Take back the moves made on your turn by touching the undo icon (bottom icon). This takes you back to the start of your turn after you rolled the dice.

How to get useful information

Select **Show Possible Moves** (in preferences/settings) to have the game show which moves are possible when you touch a piece. It can be selected in Preferences/Settings.

Want to see what your opponent's moves were? Touch in the left play area before you roll your dice. Arrows will show the moves. Touch again to remove the arrows.

Want to see what your opponent rolled on his last turn? Look at his dice after he finishes his turn.

Want to see the moves you have made so far on your turn? Touch the area where the dice were before you rolled them.

Want advice on whether or not to pass the cube to your opponent?
Before you roll your dice, press the light bulb icon.

Want advice on what the computer thinks are the best moves? Touch the light bulb before you make any moves. If you have made moves already, press the undo icon to take back all of your moves then touch the light bulb icon. Each time you press it, it will show you the next "best" move. - up to 4. If there aren't 4 possible sets of moves, it will say "You don't have any more moves" when there aren't any more to show you. Touch anywhere but the light bulb icon to clear the arrows..

Preferences/Settings

While you can play the game without ever changing any of the features and options the game provides, I think you will find the game much more enjoyable if you go to Preferences/Settings then set the features and options to suit you.

You get there by touching the wrench icon (2nd icon).

Backgammon Options

Cube is Used

Allows the cube to be used during play, if selected.

Backgammons Allowed - if selected backgammons are allowed. If not selected, a backgammon will be treated as a gammon.

Beavers Allowed - this option allows the doubled player to double the cube immediately after being doubled and still retain the cube.

Jacoby Rule - a double or triple game is not allowed unless the cube was

passed at least once during the game.

Computer Player Offers Concessions - in situations where the computer has decided it can't win, it will offer a concession.

Skill Level - there are five skill levels. Just try them to see what suits you.

Highest should give the toughest game.

Your Piece Color - select your piece color to be dark or light

Sound Options

Sound - turns the game sounds on or off

Long Dice Sound - if selected the dice sound is the longest of 2 different dice sounds

Speech - when selected, most messages will be spoken in addition to being displayed on the top of the board.

Move Options

Show Possible Moves - after you roll the dice, as you touch your pieces, markers will show up next to rows that it can be moved to.

Piece Movement Speed - adjusts the speed of piece movement. Move it to the right for faster movement.

Touch Your Dice To End Your Turn - when selected, you need to touch your dice to pass play to your opponent.

Display Game Messages - choice of on or off

Main Menu

This menu appears when you start the game for the 1st time and can be selected from the Actions menu. When switching between types of play,

unfinished games are saved. You will be given the option of resuming the game or starting a new game when you switch back.

Below are the choices:

Computer Opponent - play against the computer

Remote Opponent - play with someone other than on your iPad

Human on This iPad - switches between playing against the computer and playing with another person.

Change to Acey Deucey/Backgammon - switches the game to be played to acey deucey or backgammon. When you switch game types an unfinished game is saved. When you switch back, it will ask if you want to resume the game.

Actions Menu

Select it by touching the actions icon - 3rd icon.

New Game - starts a new game.

Concede Game - select this if you want to concede the game. The computer will make an offer as to how many points you will concede. If you don't accept the game will continue.

Save the Game - saves the current game. If you have made any moves on the current turn, it will take them back before it saves the game.

When you save a game it replaces the previously saved game. There are 4 possible saved games - one for each of the game types and opponent types.

Continue Current Game - dismisses the menu without doing anything.

Resume Saved Game - resumes the game that was saved using "Save the Game".

Rescue Game - this takes you back to the start of your turn or, if you haven't rolled your dice yet, it will take you back to the start of your last turn.

Switch Direction of Play - the default is for you to play clockwise. If you switch direction of play, you will be playing counter-clockwise instead.

Statistics - displays the statistics relating to game play. When displayed, you can switch between game stats, session stats, and running stats. You can also reset the stats to zero.

So that you can view the game stats after a game is finished, game stats are kept (not zeroed) until you roll the dice in a new game. Separate statistics are kept for each game type.

Separate statistics are kept for each game type.

About - displays information about the game including the version and author.

Main Menu - this takes you to the main menu described above.

Remote Play Menu

In this menu, you can select the type of remote play you want. Currently there is only "nearby". Other types of remote play are planned for the future.

Nearby - allows play with another person on a different iPad. It uses Bluetooth, so the other person needs to be nearby. Both players need to have Bluetooth enabled/on.

Main Menu - this takes you to the main menu described above.

Appendix - included in the appendix are:

- Backgammon Rules
- Acey Deucey Rules
- FAQ (frequently asked questions)
- Backgammon Glossary
- Game Features

Help For Beginners

If you are new to backgammon, it might be helpful to do the following before starting play:

Using Preferences/Settings

- 1 - de-select "Cube is Used"
- 2 - Set "Skill Level" to Lowest

Read the following in the appendix:

Basic Backgammon Rules explains the rules of the game. This game enforces the rules.

Backgammon Glossary explains some of the special words used in backgammon.

A good book to read would be "Backgammon For Winners" by Bill Robertie. It can be found on-line at Amazon.com and other book sellers.

Play Against Another Person

First read the **How to Play a Game**.

When **Human On This iPad** is selected from the Main menu, a new game will be started. Play is more like playing on a real board. Everything is the same as in "How to Play a Game" except for the following:

One player plays the same as with a computer opponent. The other player plays using the other pieces and dice.

Moves are not checked for validity - just like with a real board. It is up to you to keep your opponent honest.

If you accidentally touch your dice ending your turn, you can put the dice back by touching the undo icon.

Show Possible Moves is not used.

You Beaver by tapping the cube twice after the cube is passed to you. You can undo a beaver by double tapping the area where the cube is at the start of a game.

You can undo a passing of the cube by touching the undo icon.

What to do if you have a problem

I have worked hard to reduce the chance of a problem with the game. In a complex program, there is always a chance that something can go wrong.

You can try one of the following:

1 - terminate the program. At the home screen, you can do that by pressing the Home button twice.

For iOS 7, you will see the currently active apps. Find the game then swipe it up to terminate it. This does not delete it.

For previous to iOS 7, at the bottom of the screen, you will see all of the apps that are currently active. Over the game icon, press for a couple of

seconds until the icons start to wiggle. You should see little red circles with a - inside of them. Press on the red circle for the game. It should remove it.

Now go back and start the game again.

2 - reboot your iPad. You reboot by pressing the shut off button on the side of your iPad for a couple of seconds. Then restart it after it shuts down.

Then email me giving me the details of what happened. The more details the better. Email me at iPadGammon@aol.com

Saved Data

The game saves statistics and games. Statistics and games are saved for each type of game (backgammon and acey deucey) and for each type of opponent (computer and human).

The statistics and unfinished games are saved when there is a change of game type or opponent type. They are also saved when the app is terminated.

When you change game type or opponent type, if there is an unfinished game for that game and opponent type, you will be asked if you want to resume the game.

When you start the app after it was terminated, it will start up with the Main menu displayed. After you select a type of play, if you had an unfinished game, it will ask if you want to resume the unfinished game that was being played or start a new game.

For each game type and opponent type you can save a game. You can resume the saved game using *Resume Saved Game* in the actions menu.

Appendix

Basic Backgammon Rules

Most any book on backgammon has the rules explained in the back of the book. If the following rules don't make complete sense, I recommend finding a book on backgammon for an alternate description of the rules.

This game enforces all rules.

Objective

The objective of the game is to bear off all of your pieces from the board before your opponent does, or, if using a doubling cube, to force the other player to lose by declining a double of the cube.

Piece Movement

1. Direction of play is from your opponent's innerboard to your innerboard. At the start of the game, in one of the upper corners of the board, you will see 2 pieces on the 24 row. This is your piece color. If the 2 pieces are in the left corner, you move clockwise - bearing off from the bottom left. If the 2 pieces are on the right side, you move counter clockwise and bearoff from the bottom right.
2. Play of the pieces is governed by two dice, thrown onto the board. One move for each die. If both dice are the same (doubles), then play consists of four moves of the number thrown.
3. The first play goes to the player making the highest opening throw. The opening throw is made with each player throwing a single die, with the winner using the number on both his own and his opponent's die for the first play.
4. The play of the pieces consists of:
 - a. Moving a piece the exact number of points indicated by the number of pips (dots) on a die. Either one piece for each die can be moved or all dice can be used to move one piece. Or any combination if doubles are thrown.

- b. Bearing off a piece from your innerboard. This can only be done if you have no pieces outside of your innerboard or on the Bar.
5. No play can be made that lands on a row occupied by two or more of your opponents men.
6. When your play lands on a row occupied by a single piece (blot) of your opponent, the blot is "hit" and is put on the Bar for later entry into your innerboard.
7. A player having a piece on the Bar may not play other pieces until that piece has been entered from the Bar. A piece is entered from the Bar into your opponents innerboard.
8. Plays must be made for both dice if possible. Either number may be played first. If only one number can be played, and there is a choice, the higher one must be played. In other words, as much of the roll as possible must be used.

Bearing Off

For this discussion of bearing off, the row numbers are the same as the minimum number of pips required to bear off, 1 through 6.

1. As soon as a player has moved all of his pieces into his innerboard, he may start bearing off his pieces.
2. You can bear off only if you have no pieces outside of your innerboard or on the Bar.
3. A piece may be borne off a row of the same number as appears on the die.
4. A piece may be borne off from the highest occupied row if it requires less than the number on the die to bear off the board.
5. If a number is thrown for an unoccupied row, no piece below can be borne off, for that die, while any piece remains on a higher row.

Scoring

1. A **Single game** is won by the first player who bears off all his pieces or has caused his opponent to refuse a doubling of the cube.
2. A **Double game** is called a **Gammon** and is won by the player who has borne off all his pieces before his opponent has removed a piece.
3. A **Triple game** is called a **Backgammon** and is won by the player who succeeds in bearing off all his pieces before his opponent has borne off a piece, and still has pieces in the winner's innerboard or on the Bar.

Doubling Cube

The doubling cube allows the stakes to be doubled during game play by the player that "owns" the cube, or by either player the first time it is used.

The cube has values 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 and 64 printed on the 6 sides of the cube.

The cube starts in the middle of the board with the side with 64 facing up, being "owned" by neither player. At the start of the game the 64 stands for 1.

When either player wishes to double the stakes during game play, he places the side up that doubles the bet and places it on the opponents side of the board. If the double is accepted by the other player then the stakes have been doubled with the other player "owning" the cube, being the only one that can next redouble. If he declines then the game ends immediately with the value of the cube being what it was before the double.

At the end of the game the points won is determined by the value of the cube times 1 for a single game, 2 for a double game, or 3 for a triple game.

Acey Deucey Rules

Acey Deucey has the same rules as backgammon except for the following:

- Each player rolls one die to determine who rolls first. The winner of the first roll (ace is high), re-rolls their dice to be used for the first play.
- all pieces start off the board
- pieces off the board are moved just like they were on a row - think of it as row 25
- once you have moved one or more pieces onto the board, you can either move the pieces on the board or move another onto the board or both.
- when you roll 1-2 or 2-1 (an ace and a deuce), you move the 1-2, then select any doublet you like, move those, then roll again and move that roll. In all you get 3 rolls to move.
- if you can't complete any roll, the play passes to your opponent
- the doubling cube is not used
- there are no gammons or backgammons

Scoring

The winner gets 1 point for each of the opponent pieces that are still on the board (that have not been put in the tray yet).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

There are many options that can be used to make the game play the way you want it to. Please check preferences/settings and the Action menu for things you can change or do.

If you don't find the answer or option you are looking for in Preferences or the Actions menu or below, don't hesitate to contact me at iPadGammon@aol.com.

Are the rolls of the dice random or does the computer "cheat"?

Yes! They are random in all circumstances and skill levels and No, the computer doesn't cheat. The dice are not biased toward either player.

Can I move more than 1 piece at the same time?

No, not in the current version. Perhaps later.

I am used to playing the game with my tray on the right (counter-clockwise movement), instead of on the left (clockwise). Can I change the direction of play?

Yes you can. In the Actions menu, select **Switch Direction of Play**.

Piece movement is too slow for me. Can I make the pieces move faster?

Yes you can. In Preferences you can change the speed of piece movement.

I don't want to see the green markers that show where a piece can be moved. Can I turn this off?

Yes you can. In Preferences you can turn "Show Possible Moves" off.

Sometimes the computer moves too fast for me to see what dice were rolled and what moves were made. How can I find out what happened?

You can see what the computer's dice were by looking in the tray at the top of the board. You can see what moves were made by touching the board after your opponent has finished his turn and before you roll your dice.

You can also slow down piece movement. Use Preferences to adjust the speed.

I don't want any sounds, can I turn them off?

Yes you can. In Preferences you can turn sound off.

The game does not have my language. Is it possible to add another language?

Yes it is. If you would like to help with translations, I would be happy to work with you to do that. Please contact me at iPadGammon@aol.com. Keep in mind that I am only fluent in English.

Question? E-mail me at iPadGammon@aol.com

Backgammon Glossary

Automatic double an option where the cube is doubled automatically if both players roll the same die on the opening roll of the game.

Back Game a strategy used when a player finds himself significantly behind in the game.

Backgammon in addition to the name of the game, it is also the result of a game in which one player removes all of his pieces before the other player has removed any pieces and has a piece in the opponents inner board or on the Bar. This results in a triple game (worth 3 times as much.)

Back Men/Pieces the two pieces that are farthest out at the start of the game (opponent's 1 point). Also called Runners.

Bar the center divider separating the inner and outer boards. Hit pieces (blots) are placed on the bar until the piece is re-entered.

Bar Point the 7 point. A strategic blocking point.

Bearing off the process of removing men from the board.

Beaver an optional rule where the doubled player can re-double the cube after being doubled. The double must be made before the other player rolls the dice. When playing against the computer you have 3 seconds to re-double.

Block a series of contiguous points that block your opponent from advancing his back men

Blocking Game a strategy where the goal is to block your opponent's back men in your home board. The best overall game strategy.

Blot a single piece on a point. A blot can be hit by an opposing piece and placed on the Bar.

Builder a piece that can be used later to make important points later in your inner board or as part of a Block.

Combination Shot An opponent's blot that is more than six rows away from one of your pieces, and that therefore requires a roll combining numbers on both dice in order to be hit by that piece.

Come in or Come on See Re-entering.

Contact Positions on the board in which all of each player's pieces have not yet gotten past all of his opponent's pieces; it is therefore still possible for one or both players to leave a blot.

Count the position See Pip count

Cover a blot Move a second piece to a point/row holding one of your blots. You thus make the point, preventing your blot from being hit.

Crawford Rule Used in tournament play. This rule forbids a doubling of the cube for one game after an opponent wins a game that puts him within 1 point of winning the tournament.

Cube/the doubling cube. The cube is die shaped with the numbers 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 printed on the 6 sides. The cube allows the stakes to be doubled during game play by the player that "owns" the cube. The cube starts in the middle of the board with the side with 64 facing up, being

"owned" by neither player. When either player wishes to double the stakes of the game during game play, he places the side up that doubles the bet and places it on the opponent's side of the board. If the double is accepted by the other player, then the stakes have been doubled with the other player "owning" the cube, being the only one that can next redouble. If he declines, then the game ends immediately with the value of the cube being what it was before the double.

Direct Shot An blot that is within 6 pips of an opposing piece. This blot can be hit by a number on a single die greatly increasing the chance that it will be hit.

Double See Cube.

Double Game See Gammon

Doubling Cube See Cube.

Early game The first stages of play.

End game The last stages of play.

Enter See Re-enter

Exposed Piece See blot.

Gammon A game in which one player removes all of his pieces before the opponent has removed any pieces from the board. This results in a double game (worth twice as much).

Hit A move that lands on an opponent's exposed piece (blot), thus placing that piece on the bar.

Home Board your inner board

Indirect Shot An exposed piece (blot) that can be hit only by using both of the dice. By definition it is 7 or more pips away from the opponent's piece.

Inner Board the quarter of the board where you must move all of your

pieces before bearing off.

Jacoby Rule A double or triple game is not allowed unless the cube was passed at least once during the game.

Lead The difference between the pip count of the two players.

Off the Board Said of those pieces already removed from the board during the bearing off process. Once a piece is off the board it is placed in the tray and stays off for the remainder of the game.

On the Bar See Bar.

Outer Board the quarter of the board adjacent to the Inner Board.

Pips The dots that appear on the face of the die. The number of dots determines the value of the die.

Pip Count The minimum number of pips required to move all of a player's pieces off the board (assuming no blots are hit.) Can be displayed by pressing on the P key or by clicking when the cursor becomes a P when moved over the bottom of the board frame (on the right side).

Points Rows occupied by two or more pieces. A point controls that particular row, preventing an opponent from touching down on it with one of his pieces. Also, the designation of a location on the board; e.g., the 5-point.

Prime Six consecutive points you have made.

Race See Running Game.

Re-enter The process required to bring a hit man from the bar to a point in the opponent's home board. To re-enter, a player must throw a number on one of the dice that is the same as the a row that is not controlled by your opponent. All pieces on the bar must be re-entered before any other move can be made. If a player fails to throw a number that will allow a piece to re-enter, the turn is lost and the player must try again on his next turn.

Remaining Rolls the approximate number of rolls required to bear off all of their pieces.

During the later stages of a running game this gives a more accurate assessment of the game than the Pip Count.

Note: this assumes that none of your blots will be hit before bearing off. Can be displayed by pressing on the R key or by clicking when the cursor becomes a R when moved over the bottom of the board frame (on the right side).

Roll-over An optional method of play whereby each side has one chance during the game to either re-roll the dice or demand that his opponent do so.

Re-roll first roll an optional method of play whereby the winner of the first roll is permitted to accept the roll as is or to re-roll his dice using the new roll (even if it is worse).

Runners The two pieces that are farthest out at the start of the game (opponent's 1 point). Also called Back Men.

Running Game a game strategy where the player tries to get his pieces into his inner board as fast as possible. Should only use when you have a significant lead in the pip count or you have completely passed each others pieces.

Triple Game see Backgammon

Absolute Backgammon Features

- Play Backgammon or Acey Deucey
- Play against the Computer
- Play against another person on the same iPad
- Play against another person on a different iPad (using Bluetooth)
- 5 skill levels
- Digitized sound effects
- Speech
- Gives suggestions for moves
- Gives Doubling Cube Advice
- Save your game to finish later
- Switch board direction and colors
- Helpful messages during play
- Change the speed of piece movement
- Beaver option supported
- Jacoby rule optional
- Option to not allow backgammons
- Choice of shorter dice sound for faster play
- Shows computer's last moves using arrows
- Option to show possible moves when a piece is touched
- Keeps game and sessions statistics as well as running/cumulative statistics.
- Plus more...
- Plus more to be added later. This is just version 1.0!