

How to play Ludo

In Ludo, each player has four pawns and takes turns rolling one die. Roll a six to bring a pawn out, then move it clockwise around the board by the number you roll. Land on an opponent to send their pawn back. The first player to bring all four pawns home wins.

Goal

Be the first player to move all four of your pawns once around the board and into the centre of the board.

Setup

- Two to four players each take a colour: red, green, yellow or blue.
- Each player has four pawns, which start in a coloured yard in one corner of the board.
- Around the middle of the board is a track of squares. Each player has a start square and a coloured home column that leads to the centre.
- One die is shared by all the players. Players take turns clockwise.

How to play

1. Roll the die on your turn. You cannot move a pawn out of your yard until you roll a six.
2. With a six, move one pawn from your yard to your start square. You roll again.
3. On later turns, choose one pawn and move it clockwise by the number on the die.
4. If you land on an opponent's pawn, it goes back to its yard, unless it stands on a safe square.
5. After nearly a full lap, your pawn turns into your coloured home column, where nobody can capture it.
6. Roll the exact number you need to reach the centre. A roll that is too big cannot be used by that pawn.
7. Bring all four pawns home. In a game with three or four players, play goes on to find the second and third places.

Key rules

How do you get a pawn out in Ludo?

You must roll a six to bring a pawn out of its yard. The pawn is placed on your own start square, and you roll again because you rolled a six. Until you roll a six, you cannot move your pawns, so your turn passes to the next player.

What happens when you roll a six in Ludo?

A six lets you do one of two things: bring a new pawn out of the yard, or move a pawn on the board six squares. Either way, you get another roll. In the standard house rules, which Ludo Circle uses, rolling three sixes in a row loses your turn.

How do you capture a pawn in Ludo?

You capture an opponent's pawn by landing exactly on its square. That pawn goes back to its yard, and its owner needs a new six to bring it out again. Pawns on start squares and star squares are safe. In Ludo Circle, a capture also gives you another roll.

What are the safe squares in Ludo?

Safe squares are squares where a pawn cannot be captured. Start squares are safe, and so are the star squares on the track. In Ludo Circle there are four star squares, each eight steps after a start square. A pawn in its own coloured home column is also safe.

Do you need an exact roll to finish in Ludo?

In the standard house rules, yes. A pawn must reach the centre with an exact roll, so a number that is too big cannot be used by that pawn. If no pawn can move, your turn passes. Ludo Circle can switch this off in its Family rule set.

How do you win a game of Ludo?

You win by being the first to bring all four of your pawns into the centre. In Ludo Circle's Quick mode, each player has only two pawns, so you win by bringing both home. With three or four players, the game continues until only one player is left, so everyone gets a rank.

What happens if you have no legal move?

If none of your pawns can move the number you rolled, your turn passes to the next player. You do not lose anything. In Ludo Circle, if only one move is possible, the game plays it for you, and you can turn that off in Settings.

Winning and scoring

Ludo has no points. The order in which players bring all their pawns home decides who wins: first place is the first player with every pawn in the centre. In Ludo Circle, a game with three or four players goes on until only one player is left, so every player gets a place. The result screen also shows how many pawns each player brought home and how many captures they made.

Tips

- Bring a second pawn out when you roll a six, because more pawns give you more choices later.
- Move onto a safe square whenever you can, especially when an opponent's pawn is behind you.
- Capture when it is free, since a captured pawn needs a new six to come back.
- Check where opponents' pawns stand behind your pawn before you move. A pawn up to six squares behind you can capture you.
- Do not spread pawns far apart; keep them where you can move them out of danger.
- When you have a six, think before you bring a new pawn out. Sometimes a capture or a safe step is better.
- Keep a pawn close to your home column as a spare move for a roll you cannot use elsewhere.
- Remember that any six, capture or arrival at home gives another roll in standard rules, so plan for the bonus roll.

Avoid these mistakes

- Leaving a pawn alone just in front of an opponent's pawn, within six squares, where it is easy to capture.
- Always moving the same pawn, instead of keeping two or three in play for more choices.
- Ignoring safe squares, and ending turns in the open when a safe square is in reach.
- Rushing one pawn home while the other three are still in the yard, and then waiting for sixes.
- Forgetting the exact roll rule, and wasting moves close to the centre.

Words to know

Yard: The coloured corner where your pawns start and where captured pawns return.

Start square: The square on the track where your pawn enters after a six.

Star square: A marked safe square on the track. Pawns here cannot be captured.

Home column: The coloured lane of squares at the end of your lap. Only your pawns enter it.

Capture: Landing on an opponent's pawn to send it back to its yard.

House rules: Optional changes to the rules, such as whether a capture gives another roll.