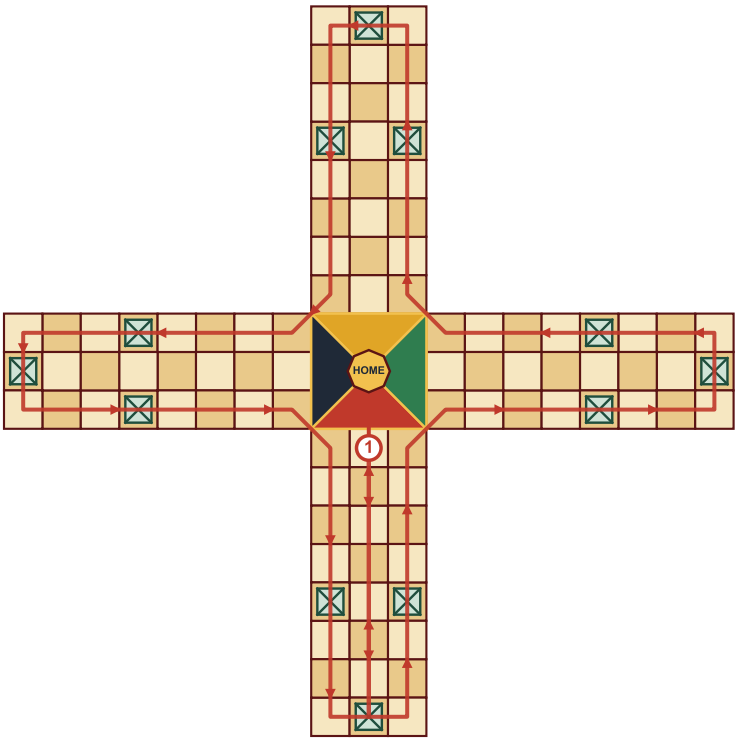
Pachisi: How to Play

2 or 4 players · about 45-90 minutes (2 pieces each: about 30) · ages 8 and up



Red's path

Red sits at the bottom. A red piece comes out of the center onto square 1, goes down the middle of the bottom arm, then turns right and travels around the outside of all four arms, counter-clockwise.

Back at the bottom arm it goes up the middle and into the center: home. That is 83 squares, plus 1 more to get home.

Every color does the same from its own arm.

1. **Set up**
   Play with 2 players (sit opposite) or 4 players in 2 teams (partners sit opposite: Red with Yellow, Green with Black). Each player has 4 pieces in the center (use 2 each for a shorter game). Everyone throws: the biggest move goes first (25 is biggest; tie: throw again), then turns go to the right.
2. **Throw**
   Throw the 6 shells and count the mouths facing up. No shells? Use 6 coins: heads up counts as a mouth. 0 up is 25, 1 up is 10, 2 to 6 up is 2 to 6. After a 25, 10 or 6, throw again.
3. **Move**
   Move one piece that many squares (leaving the center, a 2 puts it on square 2). Every piece starts by coming down the middle of its own arm, goes all the way around the outside of the board, then back up the middle and into the center. If you can move, you must.
4. **Capture**
   Land on an opponent's piece on a plain square and it goes back to the center to start again. Then you throw again. You never capture your partner. Your own pieces, and your partner's, may share a square.
5. **Castles**
   Castle squares (with an X) are safe: you may not land on a castle that has an opponent's piece.
6. **Home**
   You need the exact number to reach the center, except from the last square: any throw takes it home. If a throw is too big for every piece, your turn is over, even after a 25, 10 or 6.
7. **Win**
   The first player, or team, with all their pieces home wins.

About these rules: Pachisi has been played in India for hundreds of years, with many family rules. These are a simple version of the rules most often written down, with 6 shells instead of 7.