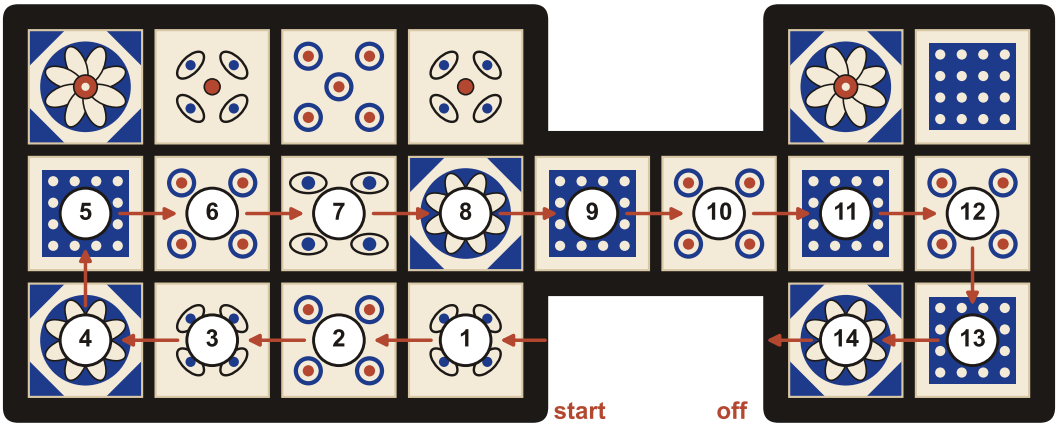
Royal Game of Ur: How to Play

2 players · about 30 minutes · ages 8 and up



Dark's path, squares 1 to 14. Light's path is the same, using the top row.

1 **Set up**

Each player takes 7 pieces, light or dark. All pieces start off the board. Your row is the outer row on your side. The middle row is shared. Both players throw the dice: the higher throw goes first (tie: throw again).

2 **Throw**

On your turn, throw the 4 pyramid dice from the pieces sheet (or flip 4 coins: heads count). Count the dice with a blue-dot tip pointing up. That number, 0 to 4, is how many squares you move ONE piece. A throw of 0 means your turn is over.

3 **Move**

Bring a new piece onto the board (a throw of 1 puts it on square 1, a 4 on square 4), or move a piece already on it. Follow the path in the picture. You may jump over any pieces. If you can move, you must.

4 **Bump**

You may not land on your own piece. If you land on your opponent's piece in the middle row, it goes back off the board and must start again.

5 **Rosettes**

Land on a rosette and you throw again. A piece on the middle rosette is safe: the other player cannot land there.

6 **Go off**

Going off is one step past square 14 and needs the exact number: a 1 from square 14, a 2 from 13, a 3 from 12, a 4 from 11. If no piece can move, your turn is over.

7 **Win**

The first player to take all 7 pieces off the board wins.

About these rules: nobody wrote the rules down when the first boards were made. These are the rules most people play today, worked out by experts from clues on a clay tablet written by a Babylonian scribe in 177 BC, more than 2,000 years after the board in the British Museum was made.