

Royal Game Of Ur

The ***Royal Game of Ur***, also known as the ***Game of Twenty Squares*** (or simply the Game of Ur) is a two-player strategy race board game that was first played in ancient Mesopotamia during the early third millennium BC. The Game of Ur remained popular until late antiquity, when it stopped being played, possibly evolving into, or being displaced by, an early form of backgammon.

The Game of Ur received its name because it was first rediscovered by the English archaeologist **Sir Leonard Woolley** during his excavations of the ***Royal Cemetery at Ur*** between **1922 and 1934**. Copies of the game have since been found by other archaeologists across the Middle East.

The rules of the Game of Ur as it was played in the second century BC have been preserved on a [Babylonian clay tablet](#) written by the scribe Itti-Marduk-balāṭu. Based on this **tablet** and the **shape of the gameboard**, [British Museum](#) curator [Irving Finkel](#) reconstructed the basic rules of how the game **might have been played**.

See [https://www.academia.edu/15173145/On the Rules for the Royal Game of Ur](https://www.academia.edu/15173145/On_the_Rules_for_the_Royal_Game_of_Ur)

A Russian game re-constructor [Dmitriy Skiryuk](#) (developed his own version of rules, originally published on his [blog](#) (<https://skyruc.livejournal.com/231444.html>)). These rules are an interesting and challenging set of rules which is specific to the Royal Game of Ur and require square markings on each square, as opposed to just blank squares. A detailed description of the game can be found here: <https://www.ancientgames.org/royal-game-ur-game-20-squares/>

Any version of rules can be played with this game set. The rules developed [Dmitriy Skiryuk](#) are outlined in the next page.

The gameplay involves elements of both luck and strategy. Movements are determined by rolling a 4 four-sided, tetrahedron-shaped dice. Two of the four corners of each die are marked and the other two are not, giving each die an equal chance of landing with a marked or unmarked corner facing up. The number of marked ends facing upwards indicates how many spaces a player may move during that turn.

Checkers have a plain (blank) side and a 5-dot side. They start plain side up and are flipped over half way round the board (see next page for details), “Combat” happens in the eight squares in the middle of the board. When your checker lands on one of these squares occupied by one of your opponent's checkers then, depending on the type of square, your opponent's checker is trapped (until your checker moves from the square) or “knocked out” (i.e sent back off the board so that it must restart the course from the beginning) but plain checkers can only be knocked out by plain checkers and 5-dot checker by 5-dot checkers.

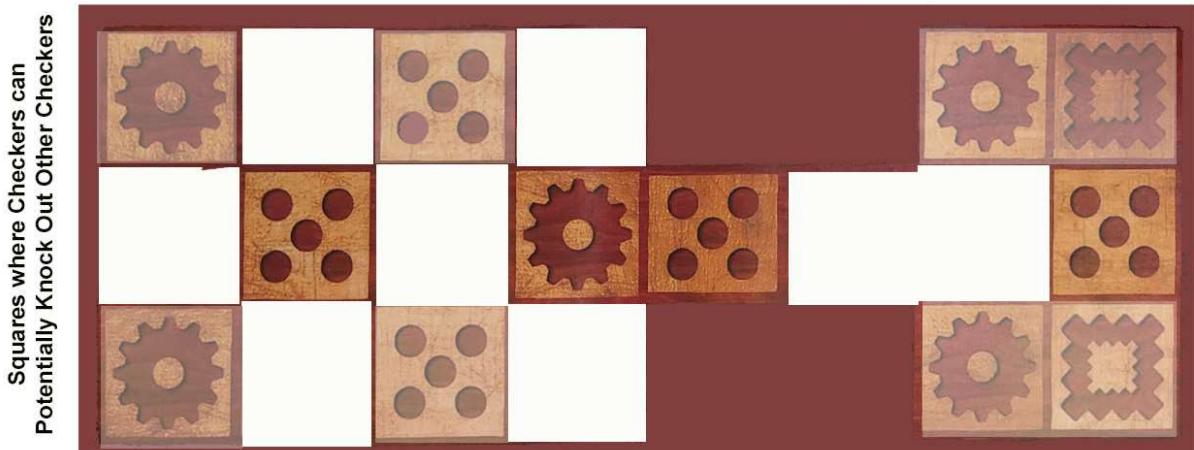
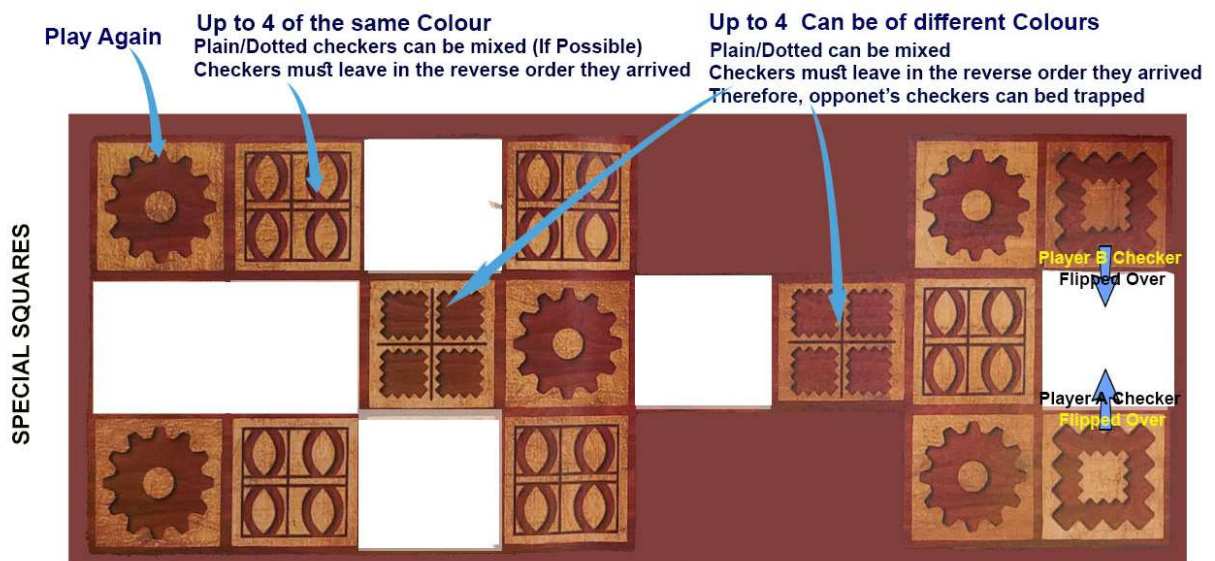
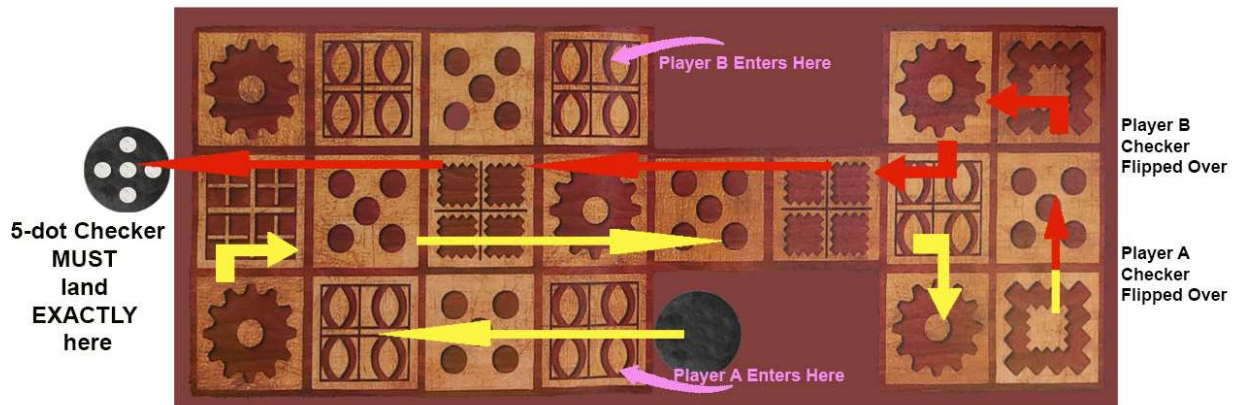
When a player rolls a number using the dice, they may choose to move any of their checker on the board or add a new checker to the board if they still have pieces that have not entered the game. A player is not required to capture a checker every time they have the opportunity, but players are required to move a checker whenever possible, even if it results in an unfavorable outcome.

In order to move a checker off the board, a player must roll exactly the number of spaces remaining until the end of the course plus one. If the player rolls a number higher than this number they may not move the piece off the board.

Checkers have a plain (blank) side and a 5-dot side.

Direction of movement: Checkers start as “plain” and follow the yellow path. They get flipped over to the 5-dot side when they pass the point indicated below and follow the red path.

Dice: Count the number of marked tips uppermost on the 3 dice, but note that 0 counts as 4 (i.e. possible dice values are 1, 2 3 or 4)



These squares can only be occupied by 1 checker. - therefore

- 1) A Plain/Dotted checker cannot land here if already occupied by one's own checker
- 2) A Plain Checker will knock out an opponent's Plain checker (NB: applies to non faded squares)
- 3) A Dotted Checker will knock out an opponent's Dotted checker (NB: applies to non faded squares)

NOTE Plain cannot knock out Dotted & Dotted cannot knock out Plain.

Faded Squares are “Safe” (because of the path followed by checkers

+ Plain cannot knock out Dotted + Dotted cannot knock out Plain)

Special For Dotted



Can only be occupied by 1 checker.

Safe for Dotted Checker i.e. Dotted Checker cannot be knocked out

Plain checker CAN knock out opponet's Plain checker (but not Dotted)